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Enriching and equipping Spirit-filled ministers - Winter 2011

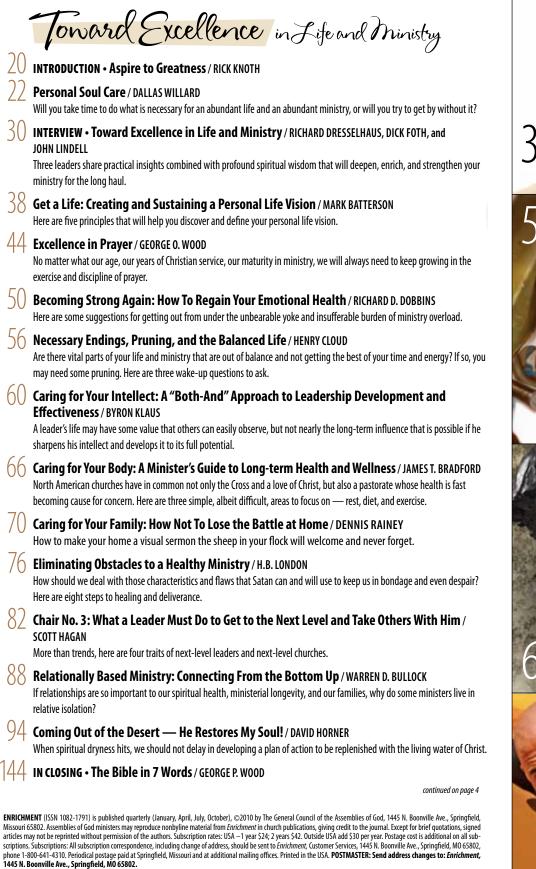
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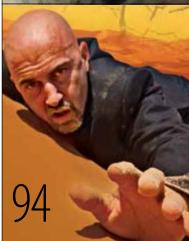
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Next Time in enrichment: TEACH US TO PRAY

One day Jesus' disciples saw Him praying. They asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:2). In teaching them how to pray, Jesus gave them a model by which to pray — traditionally called The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4). But do we really understand what Jesus is teaching us about prayer?

In this issue of *Enrichment*, we ask James T. Bradford, Dick Brogdon, Isaac Canales, Joseph L. Castleberry, Alicia Britt Chole, Jason Frenn, Tom Lofton, Lori O'Dea, Doug Oss, Marc Turnage, George O. Wood, and George Paul Wood to examine The Lord's Prayer and bring practical application for pastors and their congregations. The *Enrichment* staff trusts these articles provide you with fresh insight and teaching material for an often-quoted prayer.

enrichment

Enriching and equipping Spirit-filled ministers

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FROM BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS

pirituality Mat

If you have been listening lately, you know that spirituality is the hot topic bouncing around news outlets, both mainstream and Christian. What is interesting about this is the Millennial Generation's preference for spirituality over religion. The Pew Forum, reporting on the data from its 2008 Religious Landscape Survey, notes that young adults "are less likely to be affiliated" with a particular religious group, including "one in four ... unaffiliated with any particular faith." *USA Today*, reporting on a recent survey by LifeWay Research, reveals that 72 percent of Millennials say "they're more spiritual than religious."²

While there may be a number of issues involved in this, it essentially boils down to disenchantment with organized religious institutions of every denominational stripe, which they see as having no relevance to their daily lives. They are bored with *status quo* church.

As Pentecostal church leaders, we need to pay attention to this data and renew our efforts to be true to our grand legacy, preferring:

- life over form
- revelation over inspiration
- true service over lip service

RANDY WALLS, D.MIN., director of continuing education, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

NOTES

- 1. PewForum.org "Religion Among the Millennials," February 17, 2010.
- USAToday.com "Survey: 72% of Millennials 'more spiritual than religious;" http://www.usatoday.com/ news/religion/2010-04-27-1Amillfaith27_ST_N.htm (accessed 5/27/2010).



THE CULTURE CHRONICLES

HARLEY DAVIDSON WALKERS

creativity think tank recently brainstormed on consumer products and came up with a can't-miss idea: designer walkers. In the next few decades we just might see seniors sporting walkers by Gucci, Coach, or Harley Davidson.

With a falling birthrate and aging population, products designed for the 55-and-over crowd are hot and getting hotter. "Middle-aged people don't get old anymore," wrote a gerontology expert. Instead, seniors seem to have a completely different self-image than earlier generations and are pursuing an active retirement with travel, new experiences and hobbies, and sometimes new spouses and families.

Many of today's elderly are financially well off and willing to invest in products and experiences to make their golden years better. And it is tempting to self-indulge says Warren Wiersbe: "As we grow older, we're confronted with temptations that we've shunned in youth, but that now look very attractive: cutting corners, eliminating disciplines, lowering standards."

But seniors play a vital role in the life of the culture and the life of the local church, as well. "God calls older Christians to model what God wants the next generation to become," writes Steve Mathewson in a sermon called "Older People: The Future of Our Church." In Titus and 2 Timothy, Paul outlines the essential role of seniors in the health and vitality of the church. Just make sure to leave room in the pews for those diamond-studded walkers.

SUSY FLORY, Castro Valley, California

WHAT IN THE WORLD



You have likely seen it — a single star. With the number of U.S. troops deployed in Iraq,

Afghanistan, and other overseas locations, we see these stars quite often. Parents who have a son or daughter deployed on a military mission often display a small, white vertical banner bordered in red. In the center of the banner is a simple blue star. It calls attention to the fact they have given a loved one to the cause of freedom, justice, and peace in the world. If a soldier is killed in combat, the grieving parents display another banner in their front window. This time the star in the center is gold.

In Matthew's account of Jesus' birth, a single star figures prominently into the story. An unusual display in the sky captured the fascination of the Magi and led them to Bethlehem. For centuries scientists and theologians have attempted explanations without reaching agreement. Whether it was an alignment of planets, a supernatural quasar, or an unusual constellation does not really matter. It accomplished its purpose. It led the Gentiles to experience God's love firsthand.

With that single star, the Father proudly announced to the world that a dearly loved Son was on a mission. It would be a mission to bring peace, justice, and freedom to the world. Entering into our world, Jesus clothed himself in the uniform of humanity. Camouflaging His divinity, He experienced the fatigue of weariness, the shellshock of sorrow, and the boot camp loneliness of separation from His Father.

The Christmas story concludes with the events of the Holy Week where the mission that began one silent night ends in the dearly loved Son's death. But instead of another star in the Father's window, He provided another symbol — an empty tomb.

GREG ASIMAKOUPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington

GLOBAL ATTITUDES

Good for Goodness' Sake

I read the following in an article in a writers' magazine about a group of aspiring novelists: "They were not novelists yet, but they had the belief that they would be, in the same way church groups believe that a pattern of behavior will inevitably gain them admission into heaven."¹

Is this what church groups believe? Not at my church.

Those who understand what Christianity and church truly are can see the fallacy in this writer's thought. We know it is not being good or any certain pattern of behavior that gains us entrance into heaven, but it is the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. And any church groups I have been in discuss more of Him and less of good behavior. But do you think it is necessary to believe in God to be good, meaning moral?

According to a Pew Research Center survey in 2007, a majority of Americans — 57 percent — say yes. The answer for 41 percent was no.²

I am curious about what this 41 percent base their notions or definitions of good on. But at least a majority still think God is a good influence on us.

DIANNE E. BUTTS, Pueblo, Colorado

NOTES

Stockphoto

- 1. "A 'Lone Wolf' Meets the Pack: How One Author Concluded That Writers Groups Are Not for Her," by Anne Spollen, *The Writer, January* 2009, 35.
- 2. http://pewforum.org/Being-Good-for-Goodness-Sake.aspx (Accessed 5/19/10).



echnology, and especially social media, is so much a part of our lives that it is no easy task to disentangle from the allure of its instant gratification. But experts worry that overuse of technology may be lessening our attention spans, rewiring our brains, and perhaps even shrinking our IQs. "Many people have become so addicted to being plugged in they can't go 15 minutes without checking their e-mail," says Julie Morgenstern, best-selling author and timemanagement and organization expert. The remedy? Some people have decided to take breaks from technology for Sabbath, Lent, or even just peace of mind.

Unplugging goes by different names, including Secular Sabbath, Shutdown Day, and No Technostress Day. There are different ways to unplug, such as digital vacations, which involve avoiding e-mail and texting, or using a computer application like "Freedom," which temporarily renders Web connections inoperative for a predetermined time.

If technology continues to consume the culture, then unplugging from technology for days, or even just hours, may become as exciting and popular as buying the latest digital device. Blogger Ariel Meadow Stallings decided to avoid technology one night a week for a year and blogs about the experience in a project called "52 Nights Unplugged." Every Wednesday night she shuts down her computer, e-mail, cell phone, and television. After she spread the word on her blog, she connected with thousands of people around the world who decided to unplug, too. "Developing your tolerance for being unplugged for several hours at a time allows you to truly engage with people on issues at a higher quality and more in-depth level," explains Morgenstern.

SUSY FLORY, Castro Valley, California



UPWORDS



The Alaskan highway department recently installed rumble strips

along roads. A rumble strip is a continuous strip of shallow grooves along each side of the roadway, cut perpendicular to the direction of traffic flow. If a vehicle starts to leave the



highway, the grooves generate a loud roar and severe vibration throughout the vehicle, which alerts the driver to impending peril.

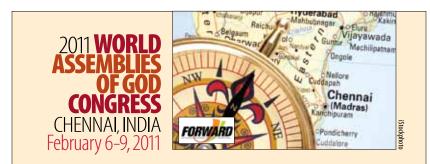
The Christian life is sometimes compared to a highway, and God's will is the safe zone on which we travel. Unfortunately, just like drivers, Christians are momentarily distracted, fall asleep at the wheel, and drift away from God's chosen path.

For our safety, God installs rumble strips along our spiritual highway. These may take the form of an anointed sermon that exposes our error, a Scripture verse that takes on a new meaning, or a friend who expresses concern about our attitudes or actions. Ultimately, these warnings are the work of the Holy Spirit who continually illuminates our path and consistently warns us when we are in danger of wandering away from it.

God does not build impenetrable retaining walls to hold us on course — we must still choose to obey and take up our cross daily to follow Him. However, when we begin veer off the path God has chosen for us, the Holy Spirit has many ways of making himself heard and even shaking us up a bit.

Serious consequences await the driver, or the Christian, who ignores the warnings of the rumble strips.

JACK AIKEN, Eagle River, Alaska



The World Assemblies of God Congress is a great opportunity for the leaders of the body of Christ to be empowered by the Holy Spirit and envisioned to fulfill the Great Commission. Our prayer is that the Lord of the harvest will make this sacred gathering an epicenter for the outpouring of His Spirit upon His church worldwide. We welcome you to Chennai, India, to experience a fresh touch of God and to glorify the name of Jesus Christ.

Registration cost is \$140 per person (\$200 per person after Dec 31st, 2010). For more information, visit http://wagf2011.com/

IMPORTANT: You are required to obtain an Indian visa in addition to your passport. We recommend you apply for your visa in October or November 2010. Before applying, please e-mail us at **visainfo@wagf2011.com** for specific instructions on filling out your application.

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LEADERLIFE BUSYNESS and Fulfillment in Ministry

Ministry can become all-consuming. The activities that accompany the minister's role can crowd out other dimensions of our lives, even those as important as family. The persona of our ministerial role can become something vastly different, in essence, than who we are as persons.

Even a natural bent toward creativity can contribute to uncritiqued busyness intruding into our lives. For example, if you are making statements such as, "Half of what I end up doing on a given day, I hadn't planned to do when I got up," or "When brainstorms come, I usually drop what I've planned, get blown away, and don't return," then undisciplined scheduling can be part of the busyness that is crippling you.

We can seriously impact the constant battle with our sense of worth as humans by how fragile we are in handling disappointing others. Here is where the line between our role as minister and our own humanity gets blurred as we find comfort in knowing some people approve of our efforts, but feel guilty that we cannot meet everyone's expectations. If there is self-talk that includes statements like, *I lie awake at night sometimes, worrying about someone I couldn't visit;* or, *I'm so busy doing everything that's expected of me, I sometimes forget what God called me to do,* may be a signal that the busyness paralyzing your effectiveness is present because of a fragile sense of personal worth.

First Timothy 4:14–16 is clear that God's call to church leaders requires vigilance on our part to calibrate our personal connectedness to God with the work we do as a called and gifted leader. Paul says the result of this process is that we save both ourselves and our hearers.

BYRON KLAUS, D.MIN., president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri



TIMEWISE



The Value of Time Cushions

A cushion is a pad that absorbs shock or provides comfort. In busy schedules people need to build in time cushions to soften disruptions, unexpected crises, and other unexpected time grabbers, even ones as common as traffic delays. We need breaks to relax, time to exercise

to produce endorphins that stimulate happy feelings, and quiet moments to hear God's voice.

Schedule for time cushions. Estimate the time needed for a task and then add a little extra. Even 10 minutes can bring relief and give you time to reenergize. A few minutes every hour makes a huge difference to your overall well-being. Stop setting appointments too close. Stop filling every increment of time in a daily planner. Instead use longer blocks of time and write in breaks.

Use the breaks to refresh. Drink water, take some deep breaths, close your eyes and listen for God, relax your muscles, or get up and stretch. Make a list of minute stress busters that relieve tension and use these stress busters when interruptions or overflow of an activity do not fill time cushions.

Time cushions will help you slow down and stop rushing. You can relax knowing there is extra time to field an unexpected need. And you will have extra moments to smile, greet people, or phone a loved one just to say, "I love you." Your relaxed attitude will put others at ease. A few minutes to sprinkle joy in someone's life will lift that person's spirits and your own.

KAREN WHITING, author and speaker

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

BITTERNESS in the Heart of a Pastor

am convinced that bitterness, more than any other ministry killer, derails the effectiveness of pastors. More than any other profession, pastors are at the front line of hurt, viewing raw humanity up close in all its ugly sinfulness. Pastors are often the object of someone's anger, dissatisfaction, or selfishness. I think God allows pastors to be hurt deeply because it gives them opportunity to display the kind of redemptive grace that frequently permeates their preaching.

How can a pastor effectively preach on bitterness without experiencing gut-wrenching betrayals? How can he talk about agape love if he has never once had to ask God to implant it in his own wounded heart? The answer is, he can't.

Pastors preach and serve in a vacuum because their lives are on public display. I know a pastor so overcome with bitterness that he could not forgive his enemies. His preaching and ministry targeted those who did him harm. Black clouds of unforgiveness touched every corner of his life. He was genuinely wronged, but his inability to practice what he preached destroyed his effectiveness.

I have also known men who have endured the vicious assault of the enemy and kept their passion for ministry and their love of people. I have seen them display attractive grace in the hour of trial and inspire others to endure their own hardships with similar grit.

Pastors are not perfect. At times bitterness will take root in their hearts. But they are wise to bow before the Lord and ask His forgiveness and seek the love only the Holy Spirit can implant.

DANIEL DARLING is author of *Teen People of the Bible: Celebrity Profiles of Real Faith and Tragic Failure*. Visit http://www.danieldarling.com

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

ST. ANTDONY (251-356): The first christian bermit

ronically, many regard St. Anthony as a key founder of monasticism, yet he never intended to found anything. Anthony wanted to deepen his spiritual life. He gave away his land to fellow villagers, sold off other property, and donated money to the poor. After this, he spent much of his time alone in meditation in the Egyptian desert.

Anthony found seclusion at an abandoned desert fort where he lived for 20 years without seeing another person. He lived on one meal a day consisting of bread and water. Those who brought his food threw it to him over the wall. He slept on the bare ground.

As people learned of Anthony, they regarded him as an important spiritual teacher. As a result, some admirers began to camp near the fort. They begged Anthony, and he reluctantly became their spiritual teacher and advisor.

Anthony died at 105 and, to the end, was vigorous in both body and mind. His last wish was to be buried secretly so no cult following would develop around his grave.

VICTOR M. PARACHIN, Tulsa, Oklahoma



BOOKS & BIBLES Happily Ever Laughter

Up front, I admit I am biased about this book because I contributed to it. But I am convinced you will find it to be a fun read, a nice gift, and a valuable resource. World-class Christian

comedian Ken Davis pulled



together most of the chapters by asking for contributions from his friends in comedy. Their mission? To write about the lighter moments in their marriages and the lessons learned from them.

Most books on marriage hit the issues head-on and hard: communication, personality differences, conflict resolution, etc. This one covers the same issues but sideways, or should I say side-splitting ways. Couples need to laugh together, with each other, at each other, and at the crazy events they experience together. This book helps.

Contributors include Ken Davis, Jeff Allen, John Branyan, David Dean, Chonda Pierce, Kendra Smiley, Daren Strebow, Bob Stromberg, and others. Each one of the 30 chapters has a true story and a Laugh Lesson. Use this as a supplement for a marriage class, a gift to the engaged couple you are counseling, or as a source for humorous sermon illustrations. Published by Focus on the Family and distributed by Tyndale House, the softcover, 150-page book retails for \$13.99.

Bibles, Bibles, Bibles

If you have scanned the shelves in the Bible section of your Christian bookstore (or online), you may have wondered, *Why do we need so many Bibles?* And finding the one you want can be a daunting task. First, you will need to find the translation: NIV, TNIV, KJV, NLT, NKJV, CSV, ESV, and others in the alphabet soup.

Next is determining the kind of Bible, usually one of four main types: plain text, study, specialty, or devotional. Assuming you have already determined the age group (child, tween, teen, student, adult) and gender (boy, girl, man, or woman), you should have narrowed your search. But you still have to consider the trim size, size of type, and type of cover, not to mention price.

As a minister, you are a professional. Think how confusing this process can be for the average person. Having so many Bible choices can cause problems, but see it as a blessing. The fact is, technology has allowed publishers to make God's Word available quicker and in more varieties to a whole range of audiences. Study Bibles, including specialty study Bibles such as *The Apologetics Bible* (B&H) and *The Archeological Bible* (Zondervan) can help equip believers. The *Transformation Study Bible* (Cook), *Fire Bible* (Life Publishers), and *Chronological Study Bible* (Nelson) can enhance Bible study. The *Life Application Study Bible* (Tyndale) can bring the Bible to life. Bibles geared for special interest groups and specific ages can attract people to Scripture who might not otherwise open a Bible.

So your bookstore adventure may take a bit longer than a few years ago, but thank God for all the options and the opportunity to mine the depths of His Holy Word.



SOLA SCRIPTURA



DOCTRINE: Boring or Dramatic?

Doctrine, as a part of preaching and teaching, seems to have fallen on bad times. Some say people cannot understand the complexities of doctrine, and foundational truths are no longer what people want because doctrine is so controversial. In the mid-20th century, English writer Dorothy Sayers observed: "Official Christianity, of late years, has been having what is known as a bad press. We are constantly assured that churches are empty because preachers insist too much upon doctrine — dull dogma, as people call it. The fact is the precise opposite. It is the neglect of dogma that makes for dullness. The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staged the imagination of man and the dogma is the drama."

There is no doubt the postmodern era we are living in does not affirm the authoritative truth revealed through Scripture. This reality is a clear challenge to preachers to respond with clarity. Jesus used Scripture with a broad command of the whole of Scripture to bring to bear on particular situations and topics the full authority of the totality of Scripture. In a world that is cynical about the authority of Scripture, there can be no excuse for shoddiness in the handling of the foundational principles of Scripture.

Again the wisdom of Dorothy Sayers is enlightening. She commented that "the cry today is away with the tedious complexities of doctrine — let us have the simple spirit of worship; just worship! The only drawback to this demand for a generalized and undirected worship is the practical difficulty of arousing any sort of enthusiasm for the worship of nothing in particular."

BYRON KLAUS, D.MIN., president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

See Dorothy Sayers, *Letters to a Diminished Church: Passionate Arguments for the Relevance of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: W. Publishing Group, 2004).



CELEBRATING LIFE

for Postabortion Syndrome

In January, many churches recognize Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, which marks the anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision on Roe v. Wade that legalized abortion on demand in 1973.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, which tracks statistics on abortion and is connected to Planned Parenthood, 22 percent of all pregnancies (excluding miscarriages) end in abortion. Of women obtaining abortions, 37 percent identify themselves as Protestant and 28 percent as Catholic. By age 45, about one-third of American women will have had an abortion.¹

This means as many as one-third of the women in your congregation have had an abortion. And although we do not talk about it as much, possibly one-third of the men in your congregation have also lost a child to abortion.

Many women and men experience symptoms following an abortion, including:

- depression
- anger
- guilt
- anxiety
- lack of joy
- difficulty bonding with own children and/or spouse
- promiscuity
- sexual dysfunction
- reliving the abortion experience
- thoughts of suicide
- drug and/or alcohol dependency
- believing God cannot forgive them²

Find more at http://www.sbpcc.net/post-abortion _help.htm. These symptoms often increase in intensity near the anniversary date of the abortion.

How can the church help? Prolife pregnancy centers offer counseling and classes for postabortive women and men. Possibly a representative from a nearby center could conduct a class in your church. Class materials are rich in the study of Scripture and

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



Lach year since 1993, the President of the United States declares January 16 Religious Freedom Day. He calls on Americans to "observe this day through appropriate events and activities in homes, schools, and places of worship."

Gateways to Better Education and the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) have teamed up to help churches equip families with in-formation on



students' and teachers' freedom of religious expression in their public schools. To equip your students

and impact their schools, Gateways has created *Free to Speak*, a pocket-sized

pamphlet. It quotes U.S. Department of Education statements clarifying seven important religious freedoms on public school campuses.

For every package of 50 pamphlets your church orders, the Alliance Defense Fund will send a six-page letter to the school official of your choice. The letter cites Supreme Court cases clarifying students' and teachers' religious liberties.

To recognize Religious Freedom Day in your January 16 services:

- 1. Honor the educators in your congregation and pray a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing over them.
- 2. Make a brief announcement explaining Religious Freedom Day and provide the *Free to Speak* pamphlet in each bulletin.
- Have extra pamphlets in the church foyer and encourage your congregation to give them to anyone connected with the public schools.

To read more about Religious Freedom Day and order materials online, visit www.gtbe.org/ news/index.php/56.html. To order by telephone, call 1-800-929-1163.

UTHTRAX

Flourishing or Floundering?

Being 5 foot 10 inches tall as a sixth grader was not easy for Mariah. Everyone assumed she would be great in sports, but Mariah is a musician. When she sings, her heart soars. She is flourishing.

Although her batting average would amaze most college coaches, Erin does not care. Erin's parents like softball; Erin wants to act. Erin is floundering.

"Be all that you can be." This is what we want for our students. So often, though, it seems we want them to be all that *we* think they can be rather than embracing who they are bent to be. Do we define success as being involved in the praise band or the one slated to receive a scholarship to a Christian college? What about the guy who can capture a thousand words with his painting or the girl who has discovered that girls play rugby, too? When students show signs that their interests are different from others, do we embrace that difference and seek to come alongside them, or do we find it easier to invest in those who are like us?

As influencers, we can empower students to use their interests and talents in ways in which they may never have thought. Display the artwork of your students in your church. Encourage a dad to start a rugby club for girls. By being creative in the ways we invest, we create a level field where we give and they can receive. We give words and actions of acceptance, approval, and hope; they receive strength and courage to use the gifts God has given them in ways they had never thought of before.

LYNN COWELL, Charlotte, North Carolina

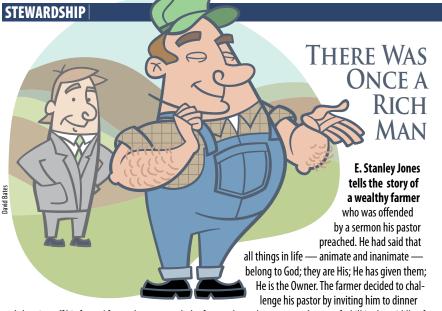
include exercises to recognize and mourn the baby, often concluding with a group memorial service. Locate a center near you at http://www.optionline. org/advantage.asp.

NOTES

- http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_ abortion.html (Accessed 5/19/10).
- http://www.sbpcc.net/post-abortion_help.htm (Accessed 5/19/10).

DIANNE E. BUTTS, Pueblo, Colorado





and showing off his farm. After a pleasant meal, the farmer drove the pastor to the top of a hill in the middle of his land. Pointing across the huge acreage, the farmer said, "You said this morning I don't own anything. If I don't own these acres, who does?"

JUST BEFORE THE OFFERING

Every Promise Comes With a Premise

One of the Bible's most amazing promises regarding giving is Philippians 4:19, "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." That promise is stunning.

Paul says God meets all of our needs. Thankfully, He does not run out of resources.

Throughout Scripture, every promise comes with a premise. There are at least three premises behind this promise.

1. We need to ask. James says we do not have because we do not ask. To have God supply a new job, we need to ask for it. Before God supplies a raise, we need to ask for it. As you give today, ask specifically for what you need.

2. We need to learn to be content. The Bible says that godliness with contentment is great gain. Before God gives us more, we must be content with what we have.

3. We need to give in faith. Second Corinthians 9:6 says, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap

generously. Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful give."

It is an amazing promise, but it comes with some biblical premises. As we give today, let us believe in the promise, but also practice the premises.

GLENN REYNOLDS, Hampton, Virginia



The pastor quietly answered, "Ask me that question a hundred years from now."

Jones followed his story with an observation: "If in reality we don't own our possessions, then the obvious thing to do is to have the sense to say to God: 'Teach me how to work out the relationship between what You own and what I owe.'"

Jesus told His disciples the parable of The Unjust Steward, putting His finger on a profound lesson in accountability. Jesus said, "There was once a rich man who had a manager" (Luke 16:1, *The Message*).

God gives you and me the incredible task and privilege of managing His property — our lives from which He expects a profit.

God owns us and everything we touch. You and I owe everything to God. "And I want a complete audit of your books," said the owner to the steward (Luke 16:2, *The Message*).

Jones, in his book, *How To Be a Transformed Person*, notes eight steps to being God's good steward. In summary, they are:

- Settle it as something fixed: God owns it all; I own nothing. Everything I have is a trust. I must give an accounting to God of what I've been given to manage.
- As an acknowledgement of that ownership, I will set aside one-tenth of all I earn. Then, I will manage the nine-tenths as He guides me.
- Whatever I keep for myself is to make me more mentally, spiritually, and physically fit for the purposes of the kingdom of God.
- 4. I recognize that in giving I am only investing. Therefore, I will follow John Wesley's encouragement, "Make all you can, save all you can, and give all you can," for my giving is investing in eternal values.
- 5. I will put at God's disposal my talents and my time. They belong to Him.
- I will accept every task or opportunity, small or large, as a proving ground of faithfulness.
- I will do all my little things in a big way, putting into all my tasks a spirit that will make the trivial into the triumphant. I will be a generous giver of time, talent, and treasure.
- I will make my last will and testament under God's guidance, careful that I do not misappropriate what God has entrusted me to invest in Kingdom purposes.

Jones' closing prayer is, "O God, my talents are small, but in Thy hands they are multiplied, as everything is when in Thy hands. Amen."

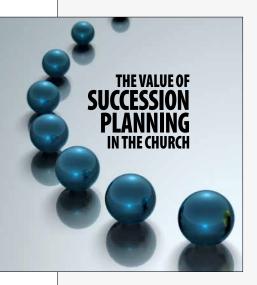
Tell that to your congregation next week.

T. RAY RACHELS, Irvine, California



Web-only articles





BY KEVIN BEERY

At some point every church will need to find a new pastor. For some churches, this process will be well thought out and the transition will go smoothly. For others, the need for a new pastor may come from a traumatic event such as a death or moral failure, or the fact the pastor is leaving for another pastorate. The author believes, "A sudden change in leadership causes a mad scramble and long-term decisions that should best be made with much planning, foresight, and prayer are made under the most trying circumstances." What can pastors and churches do to plan for a smooth transition between pastors? The author provides practical advice for pastors and boards that will help the church now and in the future.

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Don't Expect Others To Help: A Layman's Perspective on Church Work BY JASON EDEN

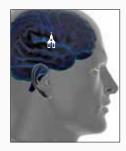
Pastors and churches often struggle with having enough volunteers to do the work of ministry. Eden believes, "Most churches could not successfully function as they are currently organized without a large, talented, and committed team of volunteers." Unfortunately, when churches are short on volunteers, pastors can have false perceptions concerning why people do not volunteer.

While "preaching, nagging, and begging might bring in a few reluctant and guilt-ridden helpers, only God can ultimately send the right volunteers into the church. It is His harvest field, so it makes sense that He will make sure the necessary work is done." This article considers ways pastors can cooperate with the Lord of the harvest to gain more workers.

Growing in Leadership BY TAMMY DARLING

"In a chaotic and often dangerous society people want leaders who will give them sound direction," states author Tammy Darling. "We owe it to those around us to develop our leadership skills while helping others develop theirs." But some, when given positions of authority, abuse those under them. Leaders cannot grow and be effective without developing Christian leadership traits. "Whether we are the leaders of many or one, adults or children, these character traits are imperative to ensure we are trustworthy and credible."







Getting Rid of the Small-Church Mentality BY SANDI BROWN

A small-church mentality is "the mindset that we are limited to what we can do for God because we are small," says Sandi Brown. This mentality exacerbates the lack of growth in the small church. "Who wants to stay at a church that doesn't believe it can do much for God?"

Is your church suffering from a small-church mentality? The author suggests there are three danger signs to let you know if your church is embracing this attitude and what you can do to change it.

The Top 10 Things To Learn in Pastoral Ministry BY PASTOR TOM HOEHNER

Over their years of ministry pastors learn many important lessons about themselves and their people. Learning these lessons is often what enables pastors to minister for the long haul rather than face an early exit. Young pastors can learn from seasoned pastors and prevent a short circuit in their ministry. While your top 10 may differ from the author's, here are 10 things to ponder in pastoral ministry.

PNews&Trends Compiled by Definition of the New Service of the New Serv



The prolonged economic slump has taken a profound toll on American churches, according to 2010 State of the Plate, research conducted by Maximum Generosity in conjunction with Christianity Today International. A total of 38 percent of

congregations reported decreased giving in 2009, compared to 29 percent a year earlier, the survey shows. Megachurches were especially impacted, with 47 percent showing a dip in revenue, more than double the 23 percent drop in 2008.

"Churches today are in uncharted waters financially," said Brian Kluth, founder of Maximum Generosity, based in Colorado Springs. "Things have only gotten worse for a growing number of churches."

The West Coast states of California, Oregon, and Washington, along with the Pacific Ocean states of Alaska and Hawaii, were the hardest hit region, with 55 percent of churches reporting lower contributions. The downturn had the least impact in the heartland states of Missouri, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, and Nebraska, which had a combined giving decrease of 28 percent.

Overall, 32 percent of churches acknowledged ending 2009 with missed financial expectations, up from 14 percent a year earlier. Nearly one in three congregations made budget cuts of 1 to 20 percent. The most frequent areas of trimming the budget among those churches included cutting staff travel and conferences (26 percent); curtailing ministry programs such as Christian education or youth (21 percent); holding the line on building maintenance or reducing utilities (18 percent); delaying expansion or renovation projects (18 percent); eliminating part-time staff positions (16 percent); and cutting full-time staff (15 percent).

Two-thirds of pastors reported preaching sermons on finances or generosity last year, while 48 percent of churches offered financial classes or seminars.

State of the Plate did not have totally gloomy news. More than one-third of churches (35 percent) nationally said general giving rose last year. And 23 percent reported that year-end giving actually topped expectations. On another positive note, 31 percent of congregations increased benevolence giving to help people in their church and community facing critical financial needs.



Help Available for Stressed-Out Pastors

Often idealism quickly gives way to realism for a new pastor leading a church. A pastor is likely to encounter unexpected situations not covered in Bible school or seminary textbooks. A confluence of factors such as demanding hours, unrealistic expectations from the flock, and a growing number of unemployed congregants can make pastoring as stressful as any occupation.

Various studies show that between one-quarter

to one-half of ministers at some point struggle with depression.

"I see pastoral depression all the time," Donald A. Lichi, a psychologist with EMERGE Ministries in Akron, Ohio, tells *Enrichment*.

"It's a growing problem that biologically isn't going away," says Gary R. Allen, director of Pastor Care for the Assemblies of God. "Ministry inherently has some traps that can lead to stress, burnout, and depression. Unlike other professions, ministry is unique in that it's about who we are, not just what we do."

Congregants in a lot of churches figure that the pastor is available not only on Sundays but all other times. Some pastors place unrealistic expectations on themselves. Allen says pastors must take care of themselves spiritually and physically if they want to be healthy for their flock. That involves everything from praying and reading Scripture daily to getting enough sleep at night. He also advises ministers not to isolate themselves, but to meet with other evangelical pastors in the community for prayer, support, and accountability.

"You can never eradicate the pressure, but

you can minimize it," Allen says.

Yet many who are down suffer stoically, fearful that they might lose their jobs for admitting an inability to cope. Allen recommends contacting a Christian counselor to sort out issues. The Pastor Care Office toll-free helpline (1-800-867-4011) provides confidential, anonymous, and free counseling to troubled pastors and their family members.

"Most depression is rooted in fear, anger, and insecurity," Allen says. "A pastor has to be willing to drill down."

"Usually depression is related in some way to stress buildup, unresolved anger, or frustration, inability to express emotions in healthy ways," Lichi says. "Then the emotions become converted into depression, withdrawal, and, at worst, disillusionment with the ministry."

Lichi exhorts pastors to take a day off, and not do ministry that day except in a true emergency. He also suggests recreational activities and peer relationships as healthy outlets to counter stress. Exercise and a weekly "date night" with the spouse also are antidotes to depression, he says.

Mississippi Ranks First in Church Attendance

A recent Gallup survey shows a 40 percent gap in church attendance in the states where Americans attend services most and least. The polling organization reported that 63 percent of Mississippians go to church every week, compared to only 23 percent of Vermonters.

The extremes are symbolic of the nation at large: Southerners are in the pews Sunday morning more than any other region, while New Englanders stay away the most.

In fact, nine of the top 10 church attendance states are in the South: Mississippi is followed by Alabama (58 percent), South Carolina (56), Louisiana (56), Tennessee (54), Arkansas (53), North Carolina (53), Georgia (51), and Texas (50). The only exception is Utah (56 percent), which has a Mormon-dominated population. Gallup says a key factor as to why the South has a higher average is because African-Americans attend church more regularly, and proportionally more blacks live in the South. Louisiana showed the highest increase in weekly attendance in 2009, up 5 percent from 2008.

Six of the bottom 10 in church state attendance are in the New England states. Just above Vermont are New Hampshire (26 percent), Maine (27), Massachusetts (29), Rhode Island (32), and Connecticut (32). The other states in the Iowest 10 are in the West: Nevada (30 percent), Hawaii (31), Oregon (31), Alaska (31), and Washington (32).

Nationally, 41.6 percent of Americans worship in church weekly, according to Gallup.

PEOPLE STILL GOING TO CHURCH, BUT MAKEUP HAS CHANGED

Pastors sometimes are under the impression that church attendance has plummeted in the past generation. But a new study suggests that the number of people filing into pews each week has held relatively steady during the past 35 years. It's the composition of those in the congregations that has changed significantly.

Sizable shifts suggest overall impact on attendance by women, Southerners, and Catholics has begun to wane. The findings of University of Nebraska-Lincoln sociologist Philip Schwadel, published in the journal *Sociology of Religion,* challenge some popular notions. Aside from a moderate decline in the 1990s, the study shows that Americans' church-



going routines have been fairly constant for decades, ranging from an average of 23 to 28 services a year.

"There is a small decline in church attendance over time, but not nearly as large as suggested in popular culture, or even by some social scientists," Schwadel says. The researcher believes that declining impacts of groups that formerly dominated church life are related in part to growing minority populations.

Sizable shifts have occurred within traditionally reliable churchgoing groups, suggesting that the overall impact on attendance by women, Southerners, and Catholics has begun to wane. Schwadel found, for instance, that women in 1972 went to church roughly 10 times more a year than men. By 2006, that gap had shrunk to about six more times a year.

Men have historically held leadership positions in their congregations, while women have been the majority in the pews on any given Sunday, he says. More important, they have been the bedrock of most church organizations, powering the clubs and outreach groups. Women no longer place as much emphasis on their role in churches, Schwadel says.

"As more women have gone to college, participated in the workforce, and have begun to work outside the home, it can be said that they are becoming more like men in a number of ways," he says.



Quality and service are invariable hallmarks of great

companies. They are also the enviable qualities of great

churches. Just as great companies require and demand

extraordinary performance from their CEOs, great churches

require extraordinary leadership from their pastors.

While it is true that great churches have many things in common — sound doctrine, vibrant and passionate worship, Christ-centered preaching, cutting-edge evangelism strategies, dynamic discipleship processes, concise mission statements, impressive organizational flow charts — they will cease to be great without great leaders.

So what makes ministry leaders great? Ask 100 pastors that



question and no doubt you will get 100 different answers. This then begs the question: What are great ministry leaders doing that others are not? To be sure, they are doing more than rearranging the boxes on the organizational flow chart or playing the numbers game from their sterile ivory towers.

At a gut level all of us know that much more goes into the process of achieving excellence in our lives and ministries than simply maintaining the status quo and rearranging the boxes. Unfortunately, many of us go about our daily routine of doing ministry behaving like we don't know more is required. Old habit patterns persist and new ones are hard to come by. Is the new scourge of ministry effectiveness the result of our own spiritual lethargy?

By reading the great classic stories of the heroes of the faith we find their lives shaped by the values they embraced. They did not define their values by the prevailing culture of the day or by an overarching view of self, but rather by the timeless truths of God's Word.

Regrettably, many ministry leaders today lose their way because they unwittingly adopt and tolerate a culturally contrived interpretation of excellence that prizes self-reliance and self-promotion. It is an interpretation that celebrates the success of the individual over against others, thus creating a climate of winners and losers. Our preoccupation of assessing merit by measuring bodies, buildings, and bucks has found its way into the church, and when we measure ourselves by it, we all fall short.

David J. Wood and Paul Ryan, in their book *Pastoral and Worship Excellence: Becoming More Like Christ*, remind us that "excellence only makes sense when the primary referent for excellence is God." Paul's statement to the Corinthians, "Now I will show you the most excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31),

WELL DONE

What are great ministry leaders doing that others are not?

suggests a biblical standard that ascends above the cultural expectation of personal achievement and performance.

To answer my earlier question, "What are great ministry leaders doing that others are not?"; may I suggest they aspire to something greater than *themselves*. They have discovered the intrinsic value of "the most excellent way" that promotes Christ over

ministry and others over self; they have learned "to conduct [themselves] in a manner worthy of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27) and to "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than [*themselves*]" (Philippians 2:3,4, emphasis added).

Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign slogan "Let's Make America Great Again" reminds us why so many thought he was a great president. Presidential campaign slogans say something of the character of the candidate. Reagan's slogan was driven by his deep inner desire to see America become great again.

What if our lives are motivated by a deep inner desire for what Jim Collins, in his book, *Good to Great*, calls "unadulterated excellence"? Imagine for a moment what our lives, families, relationships, ministries, churches, and communities could look like if, in our "unadulterated" pursuit of excellence, we lived by the slogan, "Aspire to Something Greater Than Yourself."

A great deal of thought and prayer has gone into this issue's theme, "Toward Excellence in Life and Ministry." May the articles and authors challenge you to "Aspire to Something Greater Than Yourself."

I'm up for the challenge. How about you?



RICK KNOTH, managing editor, *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri

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Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life" (Proverbs 4:23, NASB).

PERSONAL

By Dallas Willard

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The call of God to minister the gospel is a high honor and a noble challenge. It carries unique opportunities as well as special burdens and dangers for members of the clergy and their families. Pastors can fruitfully bear these burdens and overcome these dangers. But that will not happen unless the minister constantly renews his "inner person" (2 Corinthians 4:16¹) by accessing the riches of God and His kingdom.

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WILL YOU TAKE TIME TO DO WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR AN ABUNDANT LIFE AND AN ABUNDANT MINISTRY, OR WILL YOU TRY TO GET BY WITHOUT IT?

Personal Soul Care (continued from page 23)

THE SOUL AND THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

I define *soul* as the hidden or spiritual side. It includes an individual's thoughts and feelings, along with heart or will, with its intents and choices. It also includes an individual's body life and social relations, which, in their inner meaning and nature, are just as hidden as thoughts and feelings.

The secret to a strong, healthy, and fruitful ministerial life lies in how we work *with* God in all these dimensions. Together they make up the real person. They are the inescapable sources of our outward life, and they almost totally determine what effects for good or ill our ministerial activities will have. Natural gifts, external circumstances, and special opportunities are of little significance. The good tree, Jesus said, "bears good fruit" (Matthew 7:17). If we tend to the tree, the fruit will take care of itself.

In the Great Commandment Jesus referred to the inner dimensions of life: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). This commandment does not so much tell us what we must do but what we must cultivate in the care of our souls. This is true for all believers and is certainly true for ministers of the gospel.² Our high calling and sacrificial service can find adequate support only in a personality totally saturated with God's *agape* love (see 1 Corinthians 13).

But we must be clear that the biblical passages on love — those cited above and others, including 1 John 4 — do not tell us to *act* as if we love God with our whole beings and our neighbors as ourselves. Such an attempt, without the love of God indwelling us, is impossible. We will become angry and hopeless — as, in fact, happens to many ministers and their families.

CHARACTER AND THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The sudden failures in the lives of some ministers are never sudden but are the surfacing of long-standing deficiencies in "the hidden person of the heart" (1 Peter 3:4). Divine love permeating every part of our lives is, by contrast, a resource adequate to every condition of life and death, as 1 Corinthians 13 assures us. This love is, in the words of Jesus, "a well of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). And from those possessed of divine love there flow "rivers of living water" to a thirsty world (7:38).

The people to whom we minister and speak will not recall 99 percent of what we say. But they will never forget the kind of persons we are. The quality of our souls will indelibly touch



others for good or for ill. So we must never forget that the most important thing happening at any moment — in the midst of our ministerial duties — is the kind of persons we are becoming. God is concerned with the character we are building. We will build the future He has planned for us on the character we forge. Intelligent, loving devotion to Christ will never become obsolete.

God intends that our lives be a seamless manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22,23). He has made abundant provision for indwelling our lives

The most important thing happening at any moment in the midst of our ministerial duties is the kind of persons we are

becoming.

here and now. Appropriate attention to the care of our souls through His empowerment will yield this rich spiritual fruit and deliver us from the "deeds of the flesh" (verses 19–21). We can be channels of the grace of the risen Christ, and through our activities — speaking, praying, healing, administering — He can minister to others.

PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The first thing we must do is to keep God before our minds. David wrote, "I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely" (Psalm 16:8,9).

Our part in practicing the presence of God is to direct and redirect our minds constantly to Him. In the early time of our practicing we may be challenged by our burdensome habits of dwelling on things less than God. But these are habits — not the law of gravity — and we can break habits. New, grace-filled habits will replace the former ones as we take intentional steps toward keeping God before us. Soon our minds will return to God as the needle of a compass constantly turns north. If God is the great longing of our souls, He will become the pole star of our inward beings.³

Jesus Christ is the Door, the Light, and the Way. We walk in this profound reality, not just preach it. We first receive God into our minds by receiving Jesus. The way forward lies in intentionally keeping the scenes and words of the Gospels before our minds, reading and rereading daily. We revive them in word and imagination as we arise in the morning, move through the day, and lie down at night.

As a beginning step in this practicing

process we choose to practice constantly returning our minds to God in Christ each day. In the evening we can review how we did and think of ways to do better. As we continue, gently but persistently, we soon will find that the person of Jesus and His words are automatically occupying our minds instead of the clutter and noise of the world — even the church world.

We strengthen our concentration on Jesus by memorizing



Among the practices that can help us attend to soul care

at a basic level are solitude and silence.

passages (*not* just verses) from Scripture. Passages such as Matthew 7, John 14–17, 1 Corinthians 13, and Colossians 3 are soul-growing selections. Memorizing Scripture is more important than a daily quiet time; for as we fill our minds with these passages and have them available for our meditation, quiet time takes over our lives.

God's word to Joshua as he undertook the task before him was, "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (Joshua 1:8).

How does the law get *in your mouth*? By memorization. It becomes an essential part of how you think about everything else as you *dwell on it*. Then the things that come before you during the day come in the presence of God's illuminating

Word. Light dwells within you and enables you to see things in the right way. "In Thy light we see light" (Psalm 36:9).

LOVE AND WORSHIP

As the Living Word and the written Word occupy our minds, we naturally — and supernaturally — come to love God more because we see clearly and constantly how lovely He is.

The Puritan, Thomas Watson, wrote: "The first fruit of love is *the musing of* the mind upon God. He who is in love, his thoughts are ever upon the object. He who loves God is ravished and transported with the contemplation of God. 'When I awake, I am still with thee' (Psalm 139:18, KJV). The thoughts are as travelers in the mind. David's thoughts kept heaven's road in view. 'I am still with thee'. God is the treasure; and, where the treasure is, there is the heart. By this we may test our love to God. What are our thoughts most upon? Can we say we are ravished with delight when we think on God? Have our thoughts got wings? Are they fled aloft? Do we contemplate Christ and glory? ... A sinner crowds God out of his thoughts. He never thinks of God, unless with horror, as the prisoner thinks of the judge."4

In this way we enter a life, not just *times* of worship. The hymn of heaven will be a constant presence in our inner lives: "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and forever" (Revelation 5:13).

Worship will become the constant undertone of our lives. It is the single most powerful force in completing and sustaining restoration of our whole beings to God. Nothing can inform, guide, and sustain pervasive and radiant goodness in a person other than the true vision of God and the worship that spontaneously arises from it. Then the power of the indwelling Christ flows from us to others.

Remember, however, we are not *trying* to worship. It is one aspect of the gift of "living water" that springs "up to eternal life" (John 7:38; 4:14). Our part is to turn our minds toward God and to attend to His graceful actions in our souls. This is the primary care of the soul we must exercise. Then love and worship, worship and love, flow as we walk constantly with God. By stepping with Him — in the flow of His grace — we live with spontaneity, love our neighbors, and minister the Word.

Personal Soul Care (continued from page 25)

OPENING TO THE FULLNESS OF JOY

Personal soul care also requires attending to our feelings. Emotions are a component of life and of our lives in Christ. Some allow their emotions to defeat them.

Note that *love* is the foundation of spiritual life and *joy* is a component in the Christlife. Joy is not pleasure, a mere sensation, but a pervasive and constant sense of well-being. Hope in the goodness of God is joy's indispensable support.

In a moment of worship and praise, Paul expressed a benediction on the Christians in Rome: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). This addresses the profound needs of the emotional side of the Christian's life.

The central terms of life in Christ are "faith," "hope," "love,"

and "peace." These are not *just* feelings; they are conditions involving every part of an individual's life, including the body and the social context. They serve to equip us for the engagements of life. They do, however, have feelings that accompany them, and these positive feelings abundantly characterize those living in the presence of God. These feelings displace the bitter and angry feelings that characterize life "in the flesh" — life in human energies only. They even transform the sickening emotional tones that permeate and largely govern the world around us — even, at times, in the church world.

Jesus taught us to abide in God's love "that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:10,11). Abiding in God's love provides the unshakable source of joy, which is in turn the source of peace. These are based in the reality of God's grace and goodness.

To cultivate an effective, fulfilling ministry, let's get specific about how to grow a great soul. Try to view spiritual fitness as more than a high-octane spiritual additive to be poured into the details of ministry. Think of growing a great soul, rather, as nothing more or nothing less than an authentic Christian life — normal, whole, well-adjusted and Jesus-focused that is lived as God intends you to live.

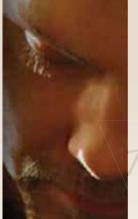
1. Cultivate a Soul Friend

Every pastor needs an absolutely trustworthy friend to whom he voluntarily makes himself spiritually accountable. Ideally, a soul friend freely questions a pastor about his motives, his marriage, and his ministry. The soul friend must be given permission to question a pastor about his relationship with God.

2. Resist the Seduction of Safety

Mere maintenance in church attendance, fundraising, or personal spiritual development sounds so good to us. Humanly, we want to hold onto what we have developed or inherited. It's good, we feel, to be safe.

Our reluctance to risk, to pioneer new frontiers, or to reinvent ministry hinders the work of God and makes it mediocre and inane. The word great, as in growing a great soul, frightens us. It is so much easier to be careful and cautious and predictable — all words that do not seem to fit in the same paragraph with the gospel, missions, and worldwide impact.



Allowing service for Christ to steal our devotion

to Him is a radical failure in personal soul care.

Faith, hope, love, joy, and *peace* are inseparable and support each other.

SOLITUDE AND SILENCE

Among the practices that can help us attend to soul care at a basic level are *solitude* and *silence*. We practice these by finding ways to be alone and away from noise. We rest; we observe; we smell the roses. God can use this discipline as a means of grace. In it we may even find another reminder of grace — that

we are saved, justified by His redeeming power, not by strivings and achievements.

In drawing aside for periods of time, we seek to rid ourselves of the corrosion of

our souls that accrues from constant interaction with others and the world. We discover again that we *do* have souls — that we indeed have inner beings we need to nurture. Then we begin to experience again the presence of God in the inner sanctuary, speaking to and interacting with us. We understand that God will not compete for our attention. We must arrange time for our communion with Him.

God said, "Cease striving and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). This verse also affirms the success of God's mission on

3. Solicit Prayers From the Faithful

Stamina strengthens ministry that is undergirded by prayer. Untapped prayer support surrounds us. We have more people than we realize who are interested in praying for us. We can have more prayer for the asking, and most of us need all the prayer we can get. Think of those people who might be willing to take your ministry to the Father.

4. Rekindle Affection for the Bible

Allow the Bible to shape you. Saturate your life with Scripture by active Bible reading. Let your encounter with the Bible shape the details of your ministry. Enter into mental conversation with Bible characters. Synchronize your thinking with its message so you hear, respond, and apply new truths to this moment of your life. Use Scripture to energize your ministry.

5. Grow Past Your Prayer Hang-Ups

Like other believers, pastors sometimes suffer from prayer hang-ups. As a result, they major on their problems about prayer without experiencing its possibilities. Most ministers have at least one or more prayer dilemmas, but a single obstacle should not keep you from earnest conversations with your Lord.

6. Enjoy God

Many believers dread spending time with God. They are afraid because they think of Him as an authoritative judge, accusing parent, perfectionistic professor, unbending boss, or absentee landlord. Accordingly, their meetings with God are dreadfully unpleasant.

If you want to grow a great soul, however, it is essential to wholeheartedly embrace the fact God champions you. More than the most loving human parent, God wants you to succeed so you can find joy in service and do your adventuresome part to advance His kingdom.

7. Pray Risky and Adventuresome Prayers

Here are five risky and adventuresome prayers that will add a supernatural dimension to your ministry, that will send you into specialized tasks, that will shape you into Christlikeness, or that will require more than your best efforts. These prayers could change your ministry forever:

- Search me.
- Break me.
- Stretch me.
- Lead me.
- Use me.

8. Commit to Spiritual Self-Care

Adequate spiritual self-care is a littleunderstood secret of a flourishing ministry. To adequately care for his own spiritual fitness, a pastor must buck busy schedules, priority pressures, unreasonable expectations, and secular values. But it must be done.

Like everyone else, pastors should desire the best possible life. That life is Christdirected living centered on our Lord's teachings, energized by His nearness and steeped in His will. The center of a minister's responsibility is to find such a life for himself and then to share it with those he serves. Thus, self-care multiplies ministry rather than being a favor he does only for himself.

Adapted from H.B. London Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, *The Heart of a Great Pastor* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1994), 188–193. Used with permission of authors.

Personal Soul Care (continued from page 27)



Appropriate disciplines are not ways of earning merit. They are not paths of suffering or self-torment. They are not righteousness. But they are wisdom. Allowing service for Christ to steal our devotion to Him is a radical failure in personal soul care. But it is one from which the practice of communing with Christ in times of solitude and silence can deliver us.

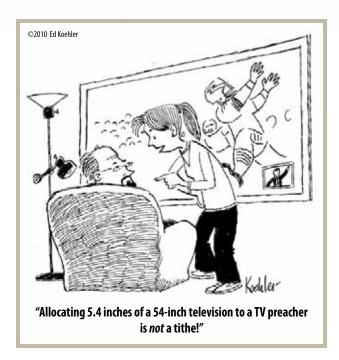
TIME IS MADE, NOT FOUND

A response to giving attention to personal soul care often is, "I do not have time for extensive solitude and silence. I have too much to do." You do not have time *not* to practice solitude and silence. No time is more profitably spent than that used to heighten the

earth: "I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

The Psalmist proclaims, "The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold" (verse 11).

Other translations of verse 10 read: "Be still, and know" (NIV), or "Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me" (*The MESSAGE*). God's provision for us and for His work through us is adequate. We must stop shouldering the burdens of outcomes. These are in His hands. Someone said, "The greatest threat to devotion to Christ is service for Christ."



quality of an intimate walk with God. The question is, "Will you take time to do what is necessary for an abundant life and an abundant ministry, or will you try to get by without it?"

First, God never gives anyone too much to do. We do that to ourselves or allow others to do it to us. We may be showing our lack of confidence in God's power and goodness, though it may be that our models and education have failed us.

Second, the exercise of God's power in ministry never, by itself, amends character, and it rarely makes up for our foolishness. Only as we actively and wisely seek to grow by grace into Christlikeness will we receive God's power. Power *with* Christlike character is God's combination of triumphant life in the kingdom of God.

Knowing Christ through times of solitude and silence will let our joy be full (see John 16:24). It will bring over us a sense of well-being. This will eliminate the hurry and the loneliness of leadership. We can allow the peace of God to sink deeply into our lives and extend through our relationships (see Matthew 10:12,13).

A young Christian, who had been guided into the effective practice of solitude and silence, said: "The more I practice this discipline, the more I appreciate the strength of silence. The less I become skeptical and judgmental, the more I learn to accept the things I did not like about others, and the more I accept them as uniquely created in the image of God. The less I talk, the fuller are words spoken at an appropriate time. The more I value others, the more I serve them in small ways, and the more I realize that God has been giving me wonderful things in my life, and the less I worry about my future. I will accept and enjoy what God is continuously giving to me. I think I am beginning to really enjoy God."⁵

PLANNING FOR FULLNESS OF LIFE

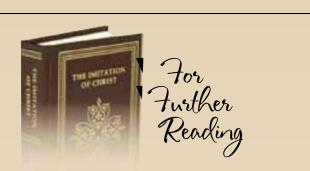
Solitude and silence open the *disciplines* for the spiritual life. It is vital to keep before us that there are tried and true ways we can pursue the abundant life in Christ. We often refer to these ways as spiritual disciplines.⁶ We can and must incorporate these as reliable ways of personal soul care.

A person could make a list of such disciplines, drawing on the history of Christ's people. The list would certainly include fasting which, when rightly practiced, has power to transform character and ministry. On this list would also be frugality, service, celebration, prayer, journaling, fellowship, accountability relationships, submission, confession, and others.

Any activity that enables us to achieve by grace what we cannot achieve by direct effort is a discipline of the spiritual life.⁷

As we incorporate appropriate disciplines into our lives, we must keep in mind they are not ways of earning merit. They also are not paths of suffering or self-torment. They are not righteousness. But they are wisdom.

Once we learn that grace is not opposed to effort (action) — though it is opposed to earning (attitude) — the way is open for us to "work out" all that is involved in our salvation,



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not only "with fear and trembling" but also with the calm assurance that it is God who is at work in us to accomplish all of His goodwill (see Philippians 2:12,13).

When we have settled into a life of sensible disciplines with our ever-present Teacher, then Peter's admonition (2 Peter 1:5,7) to add virtue to our faith, knowledge or understanding to our virtue, self-control to our knowledge, patience to our self-control, godliness to our patience, brotherly kindness to our godliness, and divine love (agape) to our brotherly kindness will prove to be a sensible plan. God will use this course of action to help others through our ministries as well.

"As long as you practice these things," Peter continues, "you will never stumble" (verse 10). In our walk with God in Christ, He will provide us, from "His riches in glory" (see Philippians 4:19), sweetness and strength of character, profundity of insight and understanding, and abundance of power to manifest the glory of God in life and in ministry — no matter the circumstances. And "entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you" (2 Peter 1:11).



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NOTES

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- 2. For development of this point see my *Renovation of the Heart*, especially chapter 2 (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002).
- For some illustrations of how this works, see Frank Laubach, "Letters of a Modern Mystic" and "Game with Minutes," in *Frank C. Laubach: Man of Prayer* (Syracuse, New York: Laubach Literacy International, "New Readers Press," 1990).
- 4. Thomas Watson, *All Things for Good* (1663; reprint, Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), 74.
- 5. Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 165.
- For further discussion see Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), as well as his *Streams of Living Water* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998). See also Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*.
- 7. See Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, as well as Chapter 9 in my *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, for ways of listing and classifying many of the disciplines and for discussions of particular ones.





unexpected and unwanted circumstances bring brokenness and disillusionment that lead to short-lived pastorates and

ministries. Achieving and sustaining excellence in life and ministry often depends on how we choose to respond to the day-to-

day rigors of ministry life.

Enrichment journal's managing editor, Rick Knoth, spoke with Richard Dresselhaus, Dick Foth, and John Lindell. These purposeful and determined leaders share insights on what it takes to have a long-lasting, dynamic, and fruitful ministry while enjoying life to the fullest.

Dick Foth pastored the campus congregation at University of Illinois in Urbana for 12 years; was president of Bethany College in Santa Cruz, California, from 1978 to 1992; was minister at large in Washington, D.C., from 1993 to 2008; and is currently on the pastoral preaching team at Timberline Church, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Richard Dresselhaus has pastored two churches spanning 40 years (Summit Avenue Assembly of God, St. Paul, Minnesota; First Assembly of God, San Diego, California). He currently serves as executive presbyter for the Southwest Region of the Assemblies of God and as interim pastor at Calvary Temple in Concord, California.

With two prior pastorates in Kansas, John Lindell has served the last 19 years as lead pastor at James River Assembly in Ozark, Missouri, a congregation that has grown to over 12,000 people in weekly attendance.

ALMOST 20,000 MINISTERS in the United States leave the ministry every year disillusioned. Talk about a time you were disillusioned with the ministry and felt like giving up. What helped you stay the course?

FOTH: Probably the greatest challenge for me was when I moved from the pastorate to the presidency of a college. There was a very profound moment where I was anxious before the Lord, saying, "I think I can pastor, but I'm not sure I can be a president." It's almost like He turned me to Philippians 2, where it says that He let go of His glory, took on the shape of a man, died a criminal's death. In essence, I felt God said to me, "Your problem is you're afraid to fail, and aren't you glad I wasn't?"

Years later, things were challenging at the college, as they are for many small colleges. We were trying to raise millions of dollars, and the pressure was intense. I wanted to run from it all. But it was the call. It was that moment that I could look back to and say that the Lord has helped me thus far, and that's the thing that held me.

DRESSELHAUS: There are so many times that come to mind. In one incident we were making plans to develop a new campus in San Diego. I wanted to solicit the support of one of the stalwarts of the church, a man of influence. I was hoping I could get his support for this incredible project, way beyond anything I could get my hands around financially and every other way. I talked to him about the program, and he looked at me with a sober face and said, "You don't realize, but you have a church split on your hands. If you didn't like this church in San Diego, why did you come? Why didn't you stay in St. Paul where you were?"

Those were not good comments. I still remember going east on Highway 8 after that meeting, thinking, *Oh*, *God*, *what do we do now*? We were into the project and couldn't get out. This was a low time in my life. The question is, what did I do? I just kept on keeping on.

I think we have to push that "keep going" button, that "hold on, stay with it" button, from time to time when we feel disillusioned and depressed and say, "I'm just going to weather this storm."

One of the humbling and "dawning of truth" moments comes when you leave the pulpit and you feel you have not delivered the Word of the Lord very effectively. You are angry with yourself for not having prepared more adequately. It's just one of those times when you feel you just did everything but hit the ball out of the park. Then someone walks up and says, "Pastor, what you said was exactly what I needed to



hear today." As a matter of fact, you don't recall ever having said such a thing. It shows the work of the Spirit.

At our time of greatest weakness, when we feel like we have fallen on our faces, the Lord rescues

I think the worst disillusionment is betrayal by people you love. But in each one of those seasons, there comes a point where you get up and minister by faith.





us in wonderful ways. We realize in these moments, after all, it is the work of the Spirit. I think we of all people rejoice in what we receive from the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

LINDELL: Whether it is unmet expectations, hoping for one thing, and winding up — after you have done everything you know to do — with something else, it can be demoralizing. Or you just come to a place of absolute fatigue, where you are emotionally, spiritually, and physically exhausted.

I think the worst disillusionment is betrayal by people you love. But in each one of those seasons, there comes a point where you get up and minister by faith. You keep going by faith. You say, "I'm going to do what I know is the right thing to do. I'm going to try to deal with these things, to work through them emotionally, spiritually, to release them." But as Richard said, sometimes you just have to keep on keeping on.

It is true that time can heal a number of things. By that, I'm not suggesting we don't take appropriate steps to deal with the source or the issues that we created, or to honestly look in the mirror and say, "Okay, I was not wise in how I did this." A lot of times, we want God to touch us, show up, heal us, so we can keep on breaking the rules. That's not how it works.

This is where a lot of pastors get into trouble. We have a problem that didn't get there overnight, but we want God to fix it overnight. Sometimes by His grace, He does fix it. Often, I

Toward Excellence in Life and Ministry. (continued from page 31)

think He wants to teach us. One of the great lessons is His strength in our weakness. I'm continually amazed at how God can bring blessing out of weakness. It's a truth, but when you see it, nobody wants to go through it. But when you watch what God does in response to it, it makes you that much more a debtor of His love and work in your life.

HAVE THERE BEEN ANY MISSTEPS along the way that have hindered the health of your ministry?

FOTH: Sometimes I expect myself to be good at everything. And you cannot be good at everything. And you cannot always be good, even if you are a good communicator, preacher, or teacher, you can't always be good at it.

This idea that I am responsible to God is a huge burden, if it is misunderstood. Hal Lehmann, missionary to Africa for many years, really encouraged me one day when he said, "I woke up in Africa and realized that I wasn't working for God; I was working with Him." My greatest missteps come when I somehow appropriate to myself something that is only for God.

DRESSELHAUS: I remember at San Diego First Assembly there were some rumblings about various things. I don't even remember what it was at this point. I thought it was time for me to preach a sermon on murmuring, using the Israelites in their wilderness experience. So I went to work on murmuring. I look back and think that was so stupid.

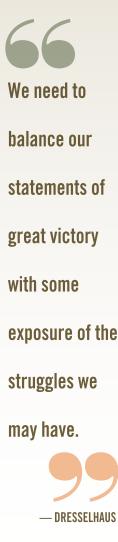
I've learned the wonderful lesson that it's not good to use the pulpit to get at vendettas we might have. Just preach the Word of God, and the chips will fall where they may.

IF RELATIONSHIPS ARE SO IMPORTANT, why do so many ministers live in relative isolation?

DRESSELHAUS: Part of the reason is the environment we create. When we go to conferences, we tend to create an atmosphere of prosperity, success, good attendance, and great victories. That's fine. I'm not saying we shouldn't do that. But we need to keep in mind that there are pastors present at these events who are in the doldrums and are struggling to get through the day. We need to be sensitive to that. We need to balance our statements of great victory with some exposure of the struggles we may have. We have to be careful about the environment we create so we are welcoming in pastors who are going through a hard place.

LINDELL: What Richard said is true. Most pastors I visit with have people who can be rightfully critical or, with no merit, criticize in ways that can hurt you. You get in ministry, you're working hard together, and then you have people who turn on you, you have people who, for whatever reasons — good or not good — go to another church or pull back.

Pastors become wounded, and one of the ways you protect



yourself is you just don't get close to anybody. So you create this distance.

I hear pastors say, "You can't have close friends, you can't have this, you can't do that." To me, that's a wounded spirit that's talking. I think there is wisdom we must have in our relationships and realize there are people close to us and people a little farther out. But if we don't deal with our hurts, if we don't deal with what we have felt from what people have done to us, then we start building walls and wearing armor to protect ourselves. When we do that, ultimately we wall everybody out and imprison ourselves.



MANY PASTORS, IF THEY ARE HONEST, WILL ADMIT they have little life outside the church. Then they wonder why they are bored with ministry. The way out of this boredom may be to create a life vision for one's personal life and ministry. First, if you have a life vision, can you describe it? Second, how does creating and maintaining that vision help you to keep your life and ministry on the cutting edge? LINDELL: One thing that's important is to be able to sense in our lives where the grace of the Lord is. Not just in ministry, but where it is in life. We know when we are being recreated. We know when we're being renewed and refreshed. It is important to be able to understand what those things are, who those people are, when those times are, and to be able to make room in our life for those things to happen. There's a grace for ministry, there's a grace for life, and there's a grace for renewal and recreation. We have to make sure that in our life we're sensitive enough to the Lord to understand what He is doing, when He is working, where His pleasure is in our life, and make sure that we align our life with that.

FOTH: I had an experience on an airplane years ago flying into Memphis, sitting next to a businessman. I asked him what were his top three goals in life. He said, "Why don't you tell me your top three, and I'll tell you mine." Off the top I said, "I always want to find myself in the kingdom of God. I always want to have tight relationships with people. And I never want to stop adventuring all of my life."

Looking back on that, I think those three themes of the life vision still are in place. I would agree with John, that the closest relationships you have — your familial relationships — are the ones that bring you the most joy.

DRESSELHAUS: I appreciate what has been said. I'm going to be a bit more spiritual in my answer. To try to live a life of obedience, to try to somehow listen to a deep inner voice, to follow the Lord as best I can, to be living a life consistent with the Word of God — these kinds of challenges are always before me. So I just trust the Lord to help me keep the right kind of focus as I move through the journey of life.

EXCELLENCE HAS BECOME THE "HOLY GRAIL" of our culture. What is the benchmark by which you gauge excellence in your life and ministry?

LINDELL: For me, it is a matter of knowing I tried my hardest. My responsibility is to do all I can, to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. With that, Paul is calling us to try our hardest, to give our best shot. Excellence is also a moving target. At James River, we do not try so much to talk in terms of excellence as we do a culture of improvement.

In my life I am constantly evaluating if there is a way to do better. But if I know I have done my best, I can live with the results. If I feel I cheated the process, didn't do my best, even if others thought it was good, for me it's a disappointment.

DRESSELHAUS: As I think about excellence in ministry, I think in terms of bringing a measure of wholeness and health. How healthy am I as a person? Am I healthy mentally, spiritually, and physically? The greatest gift I can give myself is a measure of wholeness, by the grace of God.

FOTH: It is easy to gauge excellence by how others see you. Early on, I weighted too much that direction. In terms of finding the place where one knows he has tried his hardest, as John mentioned, and being whole, as Richard mentioned, the business of playing to an audience of one really strikes a note to me — the idea that I am doing this with and for Jesus, and what it looks like at the end of the day is His call.

EVERY CHRISTIAN LEADER KNOWS THE PAIN of feeling disconnected from God and going through the motions while leading and serving

the church. How do you stay emotionally healthy while living under the intense pressure of public ministry?

FOTH: Getting truth telling from my wife, Ruth, is a way of staying fresh. She will cut through the baloney, the excuses, or the reasons I have to be tired. Or she might say, "Have you thought about this?"; or, "Let me pray for you."; or, whatever it is. Part of freshness for me comes from this relationship.

Playing to an audience of one really strikes a note to me the idea that I am doing this with and for Jesus, and what it looks like at the end of the day is His call. — FOTH



LINDELL: I can tell when I am going through the motions. When that starts to happen, I need to step back. It would be better not to have that feeling, but I don't know if that's reasonable. When I sense that's starting to happen, I schedule time to renew myself.

DRESSELHAUS: Something that has been helpful to me over the years is to remind myself of the significance of the call of God on my life and the privilege I have to be involved in ministry. To realize that I can stand in busy intersections of people's lives, to know that they will turn to me as a minister in times of great crisis, to keep in focus the great privilege it is to be involved in ministry, this has a kind of renewing to it.

PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY, WHAT ACTIVITIES have you found to be good, but not the best use of your time and energy?

DRESSELHAUS: One activity that has been incredibly counterproductive over the years is to be too preoccupied with my own personal concerns. I have given far more time to

Toward Excellence in Fife and Ministry (continued from page 33)

worrying than I should have. If I had life to live over, I would spend more time smelling the roses along the pathway, and I would not take myself nearly so seriously.

LINDELL: If we have an incorrect paradigm or understanding of what ministry is, ministry can be draining. Early in my ministry I had a concept of the pastor as being responsible in a way that is not practical. We can find ourselves living with trying to meet expectations that are not reasonable, practical, or life giving. That is not beneficial to the church because we're creating a codependent relationship.

It's been a real challenge to adjust my ministry to the seasons of my life and the seasons of the church. I'll confess that when I drive by the hospital, I feel guilty if I don't stop. You want to be up there, you want to be with people, but you cannot let unreasonable expectations govern your life, and that's been a real weight and a burden for me. One of the difficulties in ministry is trying to figure out where is the "sweet spot."

Also, I find that meetings are not always the best use of my time and energy. Sometimes meetings do not do as much for us as just being able to interact in a more personal, conversational type of setting. For me, I keep meetings to a bare minimum.

When it's an interactive conversation, it's fairly life giving to me. When it's a meeting, if it doesn't have a huge relational component to it, it is draining.

DRESSELHAUS: Along with what you said, John, meetings ought to have a relational component. Working with staff ought to be relational. Ministry flows out of relationship. If relationships fall apart, ministry ceases.

As leaders we chart the way to the depth of those relationships. If we're in a meeting, we have the opportunity of self-disclosure that will move the tenor of that meeting to a deeper level and give people the freedom to be more self-disclosing and to express themselves at a deeper level, which becomes the essence of good relationships.





FOTH: I would echo what John and Richard have both said about expectations both internal and external. There are expectations I have of myself that are unreasonable, that I think the enemy fuels. He wants me to wear myself out. That has been a big thing for me.

DALLAS WILLARD SAID, "Allowing service for Christ to steal our devotion to Him is a radical failure in personal soul care. But it is one from which the practice of communing with Christ in times of solitude and silence can deliver us." How do you exercise solitude and silence in your busy life and ministry?

LINDELL: There is no substitute for your daily time with God. So to be in His presence every day and to be able to spend that time with Him is the most renewing thing I do on any given day.

DRESSELHAUS: Certainly, my alone, private times on a daily basis with the Lord are critical and essential. The idea of praying without ceasing can work, even though we have busy schedules, if we live with a sort of God consciousness, prayer on our breath moment by moment — "Lord, help me, be with me, guide me, lead me."



My alone, private times on a daily basis with the Lord

are critical and essential.



There are also those serendipitous times with the Lord. I remember a life-changing experience that occurred about 3 or 4 years ago. I was flying back from Europe. I was meditating on the Cross and thinking about a message I was planning on preaching. I was overwhelmed and was profoundly moved by the Spirit of God. For maybe 30 minutes I just wept before the Lord. It was an unplanned, unexpected, incredible moment when God just opened His heart and my heart.

FOTH: Over the last 17 years, I have spent much of my time driving. People ask me, "Where's your office?" I say, "In my car." I'm sure as I stopped at stoplights and people saw me singing or talking, they probably thought I had a screw loose. But there is something about being by yourself in a private environment that shuts out other things.

I especially enjoy early morning walks, when the sun is on the horizon and the moon is coming down over the Rockies. It helps me to think deep thoughts. We need to capture those times where it's just us by ourselves in a moment when the phone can't ring.

GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT RALPH RIGGS spent a lifetime championing a Pentecostal perspective that affirms caring for one's intellect. How do you intentionally grow your intellect?

FOTH: Years ago, I wrote several friends and said, "Give me the 10 books that have stimulated you the most in the last year or two." I love to read in arenas beyond what I am used to or what I would ordinarily read, because this stretches my capacities. It's like exercising muscles.

The other part of this came a few years ago when Francis Schaeffer spoke at Bethany College 7 weeks before he died. I asked him, "What is it that has allowed you to know so much or learn so much?" He said, "My first 20 or 30 years in ministry, I got my doctorate, and I did all the reading and so forth, but the last 20 years, I have just spoken to people."

You can be stimulated intellectually when you ask people questions like, "What is it that makes you want to get up in the morning?" "What are the things that have framed your life?"

LINDELL: There are books on the one hand, and there are people on the other. There are times when I am around people who are intellectually engaging in a way different from what the typical week brings. That is not to say I cannot learn from people in a regular week, but it is wonderful to have relational time with people who are smarter than you and who have an insight on things that go beyond where you are.

Everybody ought to read outside of his or her vocation. But people for me have actually motivated me to do reading that has subsequently enriched my life.

DRESSELHAUS: Some years ago, the church in San Diego gave Eleanor and me a sabbatical. Part of that sabbatical was to

have an educational component. Cambridge University opened their doors to us, and I spent a month in the School of Theology at Cambridge. I could select any courses or classes that I chose day by day. So I visited different lectures. Granted, the school is, from our perspective, liberally oriented, but to follow how they are thinking, what is motivating them, was stimulating to me. Sometimes there are these education components that come along that can help us stretch our-selves mentally.

I felt the Lord saying to me. 'Why don't you stop telling people what to do and tell them who I am? Let Me tell them what to do.' "





SHARE A FINAL THOUGHT with our readers.

FOTH: Years ago I was telling people what to do and trying to get them to do it, and it didn't work. I felt the Lord saying to me, "Why don't you stop telling people what to do and tell them who I am? Let Me tell them what to do." That has helped me greatly.

Second, pursuing noble objectives is key. I have a friend who describes leadership this way: "A leader is a person who selects noble objectives and pursues them with such intensity and sacrifice that he carries other people with him."

DRESSELHAUS: I think of pastors who are in very inconspicuous places they pastor 40 to 50 people. They have been there a number of years, and have been praying every day. I just want to say to that pastor that if you are where God has called you to serve, and if you are listening to His voice and doing your best in

obedience to Him, your place in ministry is as great and as fruitful as ministry in any other place. You should be thinking

Toward Excellence in Fife and Ministry (continued from page 35)

in terms of excellence in ministry in the context in which you serve.

LINDELL: We've been studying Ephesians. Last week we talked about Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's workmanship, to be a masterpiece," that every believer in Christ is a work in progress. I think to see ourselves in some way and to rest in who we are in Christ is really what brings us value. So many times

we seek significance from what we do or what we have accomplished. But our true significance is found in how much God loves us, the fact we are in Him and with Him.

Sometimes we think of good works as being the big things, the noticed things. But most of Jesus' adult life was lived being a good stonemason, being a good son, being a good brother, and being a good friend. And there was great glory in that.



Before I share this list with you, I want to clarify something. I believe it is good to work toward excellence. I do not believe it is good to expect perfection, whether you are talking about your volunteers, your family, or yourself.

The purpose behind these tips is to smooth out potential rough spots, giving you a baseline from which to operate. Consider this a church leadership development program to help you identify and strengthen your leadership style and leadership traits.

These tips are what I consider "best practices" for ministry leaders.

1. Put God first.

Prioritize your personal spiritual growth. We often get so caught up caring for the spiritual needs of others we forget about our own. You need nourishment from God every day to be a successful leader.

2. Connect with people before projects.

Talk to a coworker. Pray for

someone. Call your kids or spouse. Facebook a friend. This personal connection can reengage your heart and focus your mind.

3. Order each day.

Always work from a task list or to-do list of some sort. Prioritize your list (and reprioritize as the day goes on). This simple habit keeps you grounded as "emergencies" pop up.

4. Have impeccable manners.

Send thank you cards. Write encouraging notes for your volunteers' birthdays. Be on time. Good manners communicate respect and value to the people you lead and work with.

5. Be professional

Return e-mails and phone calls in a timely manner. Be courteous and cheerful. Control your emotions in ministry settings as much as possible.

6. Be accountable

Seth Godin says anonymity is the enemy of civility. When you give others permission to monitor your performance, you will be more aware of your own practices.

7. Make allowance for your leadership style

Notice I did not say make excuses. Making allowance means you understand your weaknesses and have a strategy for dealing with them. Learn to operate in your strengths as much possible and how to manage your weaknesses.

8. Have grace and patience when dealing with people.

People are difficult, rude, and insensitive at times. This should not surprise you. Have a mindset that you are going to remain patient and merciful regardless of other people's actions or attitudes.

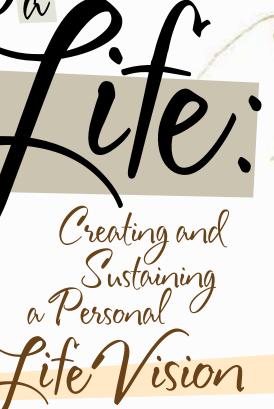
9. Remember, it's never the snow.

I heard this story from a past Winter Olympics. Conditions were horrible and most skiers were losing control, going off course, or wiping out. The gold-medalist's perspective? "It's never about the snow. The only issue is how well you ski the conditions." In other words, realize that you cannot control what happens; you can only control how you respond to what happens.

10. Listen more. Talk less.

If you talk too much, change that. Don't dominate conversations or control meetings by talking more than others. You will be a better leader when you truly listen to the people around you.





By Mark Batterson



It was an ordinary Sunday School

class.'I do not remember who was
teaching or the topic, but it became a
defining moment for me. I said something that would become my personal
life vision. My announcement may seem
anticlimactic after that buildup, but it
defines who I am and what I am about.
I didn't hear any angel choirs singing
the Hallelujah Chorus, but I knew I had
discovered my raison d'état. I said:

"My purpose in life is to help others

maximize their God-given potential."

That statement encapsulates my vision as a husband, father, pastor, and writer. Potential is God's gift to us. What we do with it is our gift to God. Nothing energizes me like helping others steward their God-given potential.

Do you have a personal life vision? Not just a vision for the church you lead or parachurch ministry you serve. Do you have a vision for your marriage? Your family? Do you know who you are and what you are about? What is it that gets you up early in the morning and keeps you up late at night?

The other day my 8-year-old son, Josiah, revealed his life vision. He said, "After I graduate from college, I want to be a poet for 3 years, try out for *American Idol*, and then play professional football." This came out of nowhere. And who knows? Maybe that is God's plan for his life. But we conceive a personal life vision when we are young and it evolves as we mature. Our vision will go through many edits and adaptations. And there is usually a process of elimination that takes place over time. You need to do some things you do not like to discover the things you love. You need to figure out who you are not, to come to terms with who you are. And all of that is part of the process of creating and sustaining a life vision.

BE YOURSELF

When I started pastoring National Community Church, I was trying to be a pastor. Fourteen years later I am trying to be myself. And there is a big difference. One of the great dangers of ministry is finding your identity externally in whatever it is you lead. Your ministry becomes your identity. And that is where I was a few years ago. National Community Church consumed my life. And to be honest, it seemed right and good. Then I had a revelation.

I played hooky from church one weekend and this changed the way I saw myself, my life, and National Community Church. It was the last weekend of the ski season, and my son and I wanted to learn how to snowboard. It proved to be one of the most unforgettable days of my life. One moment in particular is frozen in my mind. Literally. We were riding the chairlift to the top of the mountain as the blizzard-like snow was coming down, and I heard the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. I realized, in that moment on the chair lift, that my life had completely revolved around National Community Church for the better part of a decade. On



one level, when you plant a church, you must pour your heart and soul into it. Sacrifice is par for the course. But I came to the convicting realization that I did not really have much of a life outside of church. It was as if the Holy Spirit said: "Get a life."

I am afraid that many pastors, if we are completely honest, will

admit they have no life outside of church — no hobbies, no relationships, no interests, no goals, no margins. And then we wonder why we are bored with ministry or why our sermons are boring. The solution? Get a life. Or maybe I should say get a personal life vision.

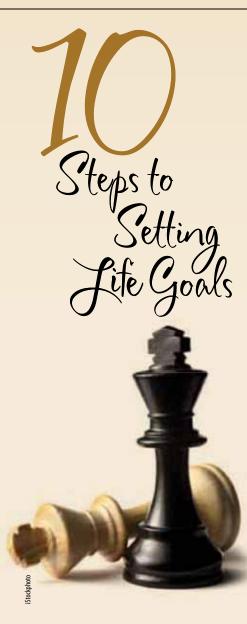
Let me share five principles that will help you discover and define your personal life vision.

LEAVE A MARGIN

I have always struggled with being a workaholic. And part of

the reason is the simple fact I love what I do. But if you are not careful, work can become home and home can become work. It is not like I had abandoned my family. In fact, we have a saying at NCC that I have drilled into my staff: "Put your family first." But I am not sure I was walking the talk. That is when I made a few decisions that created more margin in my life.

First, I give the church one night a week. Why? Because I need to prioritize my family. I need to help my kids with homework. I need to coach their teams. I need to disciple my kids



In his book How Life Imitates Chess, world

chess champion Garry Kasparov shares lessons from chess that apply to life. One of the most significant is: "A Grandmaster makes the best moves because they are based on what he wants the board to look like 10 or 20 moves in the future." That's a great picture of what goal setting is all about. It is setting goals here and now that are motivated by a clear picture of what you want your life to be like 10 or 20 years from now.

How do I get started?

I recommend that you schedule a personal retreat. Buy a new journal. Print out *Ten Steps To Setting Life Goals* at www.chase thegoose.com. And start goal setting.

I made my first life goal list in my late twenties. I was on a church retreat and goal setting was one of the exercises. I think my original list consisted of 25 goals scratched into a retreat notebook. Over the years, that original list has morphed into 100-plus life goals. And for the record, I am still editing my life goal list. A life goal list is always in rough draft form because you are always adding new goals and tweaking old ones.

Why are goals important?

You will never accomplish the goals you do not set. It is that simple. Does it not seem like poor stewardship that most people spend more time planning their summer vacation than they do planning their life? Without goals, we stop living out of imagination and we start living out of memory. Without goals, we stop creating the future and start repeating the past. Without goals, we stop living out of design and we start living out of default. I certainly do not want to overspiritualize goal setting because you can set goals that are selfish in nature and you would be better off spiritually if you did not accomplish them. But I also believe goals can be an expression of faith if you set them the right way. After all, Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is being sure of what we hope for. In other words, faith is a clear picture of the goal you are trying to achieve. And if God conceives that goal, then He who began a good work will carry it to completion. And accomplishing that goal is one way we glorify God.

Ten Steps to Setting Life Goals:

- 1. Start with prayer
- 2. Check your motives
- 3. Get ideas from others
- 4. Think in categories
- 5. Be specific
- 6. Write down your goals
- 7. Include others
- 8. Celebrate along the way
- 9. Think long

10. Keep dreaming God-sized dreams To download *Ten Steps To Setting Life Goals* and check out my life goal list, visit chasethegoose.com.

- MARK BATTERSON

one-on-one. And I make no apologies for any of the above.

Second, I try to use all of my days off. I owe it to my family. I owe it to my church. And I honestly believe I will be far more productive if I work fewer days. I scaled back my teaching to 36 weekends while building a teaching team around me.

Third, I decided to limit the number of days I travel. I started out with 30 days, but it was a few too many, so I moved to 25 days. I asked our stewardship team to keep me accountable.

Those margins help me sustain a life outside of church. They allow me to build relationships beyond the walls of the church. They allow me to pursue interests that will make my sermons more interesting. They allow me to read for pleasure.

Margins give us the space we need to keep growing as a person, not just as a leader.

CHANGE THE ROUTINE

One of the formulas I share in one of my books, *Wild Goose Chase*, is: "Change of pace + change of place = change of perspective." Routines are good. Most of us shower and put on deodorant every day. On behalf of your friends and family, please stick to the routine. Routines are one key to spiritual growth. We call them spiritual disciplines. But once the routine becomes routine, you need to change the routine.

When I am in a spiritual slump, I try to mix up my routine. Sometimes this is as simple as changing the Bible translation I am reading. Other times it takes a personal retreat or 40-day fast of some sort. You need to find ways to stay fresh spiritually. We must find ways to tap back into our original calling.

One of the great dangers of leadership is: "We stop doing ministry out of imagination, and we start doing ministry out of memory." We learn how and forget why. We stop creating the future and start repeating the past. And that is the beginning of the end for leaders.

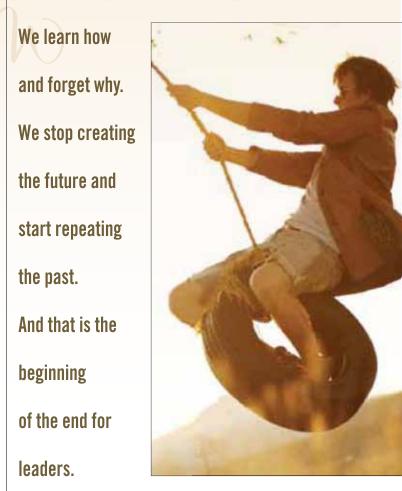
One thing that has helped us at National Community Church is our core value: Everything is an experiment. We honestly view everything we do as an experiment. If it does not work, we will stop doing it. And that takes the pressure off. It also gives you tremendous latitude as a leader. If people oppose the vision, you can remind them that it is "just an experiment." We have had lots of failed experiments — things we will never do again. But we are not afraid of making mistakes. We are afraid of not making mistakes because it means we are not trying enough new things.

PRAY, PRAY, PRAY

Praying is a form of dreaming.

Nothing will adventurize your life like prayer. If you cultivate the prayer routine, it will keep your life from becoming routine. Prayer is where I get God ideas. And I would rather have one God idea than a thousand good ideas. Prayer is where I cultivate a sense of destiny. Prayer is where I discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit. And obeying those Spirit-led promptings is the key to sustaining life vision.

The Celtic Christians had a name for the Holy Spirit that intrigues me: *an Geadh-Glas*, or "the Wild Goose." I love the imagery and implications. The name hints at the mysterious nature of the Holy Spirit. Much like a wild goose, the Spirit of



God cannot be tracked or tamed. An element of danger and an air of unpredictability surround Him. And while the name may sound a little sacrilegious at first earshot, I cannot think of a better description of what it is like to pursue the Spirit's leading through life than Wild Goose chase.

The Celtic Christians were on to something that institutionalized Christianity has missed. And I wonder if we have clipped the wings of the Wild Goose and settled for something less — much less — than the spiritual adventure God originally intended. If you chase the Wild Goose, He will take you places you could never have imagined going by paths you never knew existed. Jesus said, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

What I am getting at is: There is no substitute for prayer. Nothing will add an element of adventure to your life like prayer. The more you pray the bigger your vision will grow.

SET LIFE GOALS

I recently accomplished three life goals in one week. My son and I hiked the Grand Canyon from rim to rim. We rode mules on the rim. And we went on a helicopter ride over the Canyon.

It was more than a vacation. It was a spiritual pilgrimage. On my son's 12th birthday he signed a discipleship covenant that included three challenges: spiritual, intellectual, and physical. The trip was a reward for reaching the goals we had mutually agreed on.

You know why most of us do not get what we want out of life? Because we do not know what we want. And you will never accomplish the goals you do not set. If you want to sustain your personal life vision, you must set some life goals. Please reference my last point and make sure you do it in the context of prayer. After all, if all you do is set a bunch of selfish goals, you would be better off if you did not accomplish them. But if you set them in the context of prayer, then life goals become an expression of faith. "Faith is being sure of what we hope for" (Hebrews 11:1).

If you need some help getting started, you can get a free download I wrote titled *10 Steps To Setting Life Goals* at www.chasethegoose.com. *(See sidebar, "10 Steps To Setting Life Goals")*. One of the ways I got a life outside of pastoring was by setting goals. I have family goals, influence goals, physical goals, and travel goals. Notice that I do not have spiritual goals. The reason: All of them are spiritual. I hope each goal is an expression of stewardship. And it has to pass the true litmus test: Does it glorify God?

Not everybody has a goal-setting personality. But if we do not have goals we are going after, most of us settle for the routine. And we start living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death. God has called you to play offense with your life and that is what goals do. They put you on the offensive.

STAY HUNGRY, STAY FOOLISH

If I had to choose between someone with great knowledge or someone with a great hunger to learn, I would choose the person with a great hunger to learn every time. Over time, many of us lose our holy appetite: The appetite for life. The appetite for adventure. The appetite for the supernatural. The appetite for God's Word. If you are going to sustain a life vision, you must cultivate a holy hunger for the things of God. And they are an acquired taste.

Sustaining a vision means staying hungry. It also means staying foolish. I am sure Noah felt foolish building the ark.

David felt foolish facing Goliath. The Israelites felt foolish marching around Jericho. The Wise Men felt foolish following a star. Peter felt foolish getting out of the boat. But faith is the willingness to look foolish, and the results speak for themselves. Noah survived the Flood. David defeated Goliath. Israel

If you are going to sustain a life vision, you must cultivate a holy hunger for the things of God. conquered Jericho. The Wise Men found the Messiah. Peter walked on water. And Jesus was raised from the dead. If you are not willing to look foolish, you are foolish.

I recently came across a commencement address delivered by Steve Jobs at Stanford University on June 12, 2005. The irony is that Jobs never graduated from college. I love his closing challenge: "When I was young, there was an amazing publication called The Whole Earth Catalog, which was one of the bibles of my generation. Stewart Brand, who lives not far from here in Menlo Park, created it and brought it to life with his poetic touch. This was in the late 1960s, before personal computers and desktop publishing, so it was made with typewriters, scissors, and Polaroid cameras. It was sort of like Google in paperback form, 35 years before Google came along: it was idealistic, and overflowing with neat tools and great notions. Stewart and his team put out several issues of The Whole Earth Catalog, and then when it had run its course, they put out a final issue. It was the mid-1970s, and I was your age. On the back cover of their final issue was a photograph of an early morning country road, the kind you might find yourself hitchhiking on if you were so adventurous. Beneath it were the words: 'Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.'

It was their farewell message as they signed off. Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish. And I have always wished that for myself. And now, as you graduate to begin anew, I wish that for you."

You want to sustain a life vision? Stay hungry. Stay foolish. @



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Dexcellence in Excellence

By George O. Wood

NO MATTER WHAT OUR AGE, OUR YEARS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE, OR OUR MATURITY IN MINISTRY, WE WILL ALWAYS NEED TO KEEP GROWING IN THE EXERCISE AND DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER.

Ernest S. Williams was general superintendent of the Assemblies of God from 1929 to

1949. People throughout the Assemblies of God deeply loved and respected him for his humility,

wisdom, and godliness. Years before he became our leader, he had been one of my mother's

Bible school teachers.

I loved to hear him pray. He had a rich, deep, baritone voice that could cut through fog. As a young married couple pastoring our first (and only) church, my wife and I came from California to Springfield for a visit. Brother Williams was in his 90s. We called on him in his humble home. We just wanted to get his blessing and have him pray for us. It was a moving and memorable moment. What a power experience to hear an old saint approach the Throne of Grace on our behalf.

I never heard the apostle Paul pray, but the Bible allows me to rewind back through 20 centuries to listen in my spirit as he prays. I want to specifically focus on his prayer in Ephesians 3:14–21: "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work

within us, to him be glory in

the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

No matter what our age, our years of Christian service, our maturity in ministry, we will always need to keep growing in the exercise and discipline of prayer. In this article, I want to encourage you, as you fulfill God's call on your life, to be a person committed to excellence in prayer.

As we enter into Paul's prayer, let me note two things: his posture and his preface.

POSTURE

In Jewish prayer, standing is the normal posture (Matthew 6:5; Luke 18:11,13). Kneeling, however, is the more intense form of prayer. We find the act of kneeling at crisis times:



- Solomon knelt at the temple dedication (1 Kings 8:54).
- Jesus knelt in Gethsemane (Luke 22:41).
- Stephen knelt at his martyrdom (Acts 7:60).
- Peter knelt at the deathbed of Dorcas (Acts 9:40).
- Paul knelt at his farewell prayer for the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:36) and again at his farewell on the beach at Tyre (Acts 21:5).

Paul says, "For this reason *I kneel*" (Ephesians 3:14, emphasis mine). This is a tip-off to the fervency of effective prayer. One of the Early Church fathers put it this way: "By kneeling we demonstrate the full form of prayer. We ought not merely to



into my prayer, let me tell you what stands behind it. The Church has God's name on it. We are the assembly of God. The Church is His pride and joy."

Paul is saying: "Before I launch

incline our minds to prayer but also our bodies. We do well to lower our bodies lest we create an impression of elevation or an appearance of pride."

Jesus "being in anguish, ... prayed more earnestly" (Luke 22:44). What would happen in our lives, homes, and churches if we fell on our knees and prayed more earnestly — going beyond the rote and routine of prayer — to the fervency of prayer?

PREFACE

Paul starts by saying, *"For this reason* I kneel" (Ephesians 3:14, emphasis mine). What reason? What is the reason that drives him to prayer? It is a phrase he also uses in 3:1, *"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus. ..."*



In some way Paul connects the reason — the preface — to the entire prayer that follows. Paul joins that "reason" to the word *mystery* that occurs four times in Ephesians 3 (verses 3,4,6,9). The "mystery" is that the Church — composed of Gentiles

and Jews — would make known the many-sided, multifaceted wisdom of God to rulers and authorities in heavenly realms.

In plain speech, Paul is saying: "Before I launch into my prayer, let me tell you what stands behind it. The Church has God's name on it. We are the assembly of God. The Church is His pride and joy."

The first thing I will show you when you visit my office are oil paintings of missionary scenes that hang on my wall. To me, they are masterpieces. Paul is saying, "God wants to show off His church to the ranks of heavenly beings and say to them," 'The Church down there — that's My masterpiece!' "

But how often has the Church broken the heart of God instead? He wants the archangels to look on His masterpiece; but when He holds up the Church for display, too often it is rent with division, pettiness, unnecessary disputes, selfishness, and a lack of prayer, evangelism, and compassion and care for the concerns that are at the heart of the Father.

Every local Assembly of God is meant to display the glory and wisdom of the Father — not only to its watching community but also to the unseen ranks of heavenly beings that watch from the balconies of

heaven. A defeated or divided church is not a good advertisement for the King of kings. But oh how glorious is a worshiping church, an evangelizing church, a discipling church, a compassionate church, and a praying church.

The apostle Paul has no small view of the Church — and we must not as well. The Church is the temple, the habitation of the living God. And, because the ranks of heavenly authorities are watching the Church (and we might add — the world and our communities are watching the Church) — that becomes the reason that undergirds our prayer: "O, Jesus, help us show forth the mystery that is now made known, that you are making a glorious Church out of ragged people; out of the poor, the rich and the in-between; out of black and white, and red and yellow; out of the young, the middle-aged, the old; out of Mexican and American, Arab and Jew. The Church, O Jesus, is Your masterpiece."

Thus, the posture and preface to Paul's prayer leads us into the intensity of three petitions he brings that we can summarize in three words: *grip*, *grasp*, and *grow*.

PETITIONS

1. Grip. "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:16,17).

Think of yourself as being in a workout room and chinning yourself on a parallel bar. The problem: in a short time you lose your grip. You need strength not only to hold on but also to grip more tightly. That is why we say, "Get a grip," when we are about to let go.

Like you, I pray for a lot of people. Over the years my daily prayer list has grown to over 250 people. I laid Paul's prayer over my list and realized how spot-on his prayer is — because so many people on my list, including myself, need our grip strengthened with power through the Spirit. Here are some samples of people whose grip I pray for daily:

- A new believer just coming out of drugs and trouble with the law
- Several wrestling with life-threatening illness
- Church planters and revitalizers
- Senior citizens facing depression and loneliness
- Spouses recently bereaved and going through overwhelming grief
- Parents of disabled children
- Persons in prison for their faith
- A former parishioner who has come to faith in prison
- Others serving in danger night and day from hostile religions
- Some dealing with martyrdoms in their own families
- Couples having difficulties in their marriages or with children
- Believers facing great temptations and stresses
- A wife and children dealing with the emotional and spiritual wreckage of a husband's affair and remarriage

One husband grieving over his divorce said: "It is not easy to have had a close friend marry the woman who had been my wife for 17 years. To have her live in the same community, work in the same school district, and see the children exposed to two distinctly different philosophies of living is not easy. I don't always like the opportunities that are mine that witness to the healing and forgiving love Christ makes available to me. The love that is for my brokenness, however, when I let it, does heal."

What is the answer for these friends, these brothers and sisters in Christ for whom you and I pray? It is this — that they will strengthen their grip. That they will tap into the riches — the resources — of God that result in their inner being becoming strong, that Christ will dwell in their hearts through faith.

A car wreck shortly after her marriage caused a former student of mine to be permanently blinded. She went on with her husband to become missionaries and years later died of cancer. At her funeral I quoted a poem she had written some years earlier:

I ask: "Can we still smile when we

have gotten bad news about our health?

Can we hang in there when a loved one

has died? Can we live with good cheer? Can we remain faithful at our post of

Are you weak? Weary? Stressed? Just

about had it? Ready to give up? There is

One who is ready to help you "through

The Spirit prays through us and inter-

cedes for us with words that cannot be

articulated in our known language. We

have an Intercessor in the heart and an

Intercessor in the heavens who stands at

the right hand of the Father pleading for us (Romans 8:26,34). The result of

the Spirit's strengthening is that Christ

is firmly established in our lives and

2. Grasp. "And I pray that you,

saints, to grasp how wide and long

and high and deep is the love of Christ,

and to know this love that surpasses

being rooted and established in love,

may have power, together with all the

service, even if it is difficult?

his Spirit in your inner being."

If I should quit, how could I face myself, And place so many Scriptures on the shelf? A quitter or a conqueror I can be, And God has left the choosing up to me.



only prays

for us to

get a strong

grip. He

prays that

we will also

get a great

grasp.

knowledge" (Ephesians 3:17–19). Paul not only prays for us to get a strong grip. He prays that we will also get a great grasp. I love the prayer of

the little girl: "Dear God, I bet it is hard for You to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only four people in our family and I can never do it."

ministries.

Years before Paul wrote this Ephesian letter from a prison in Rome, he had planted and pastored the church in Ephesus for 2 ¹/₂ years. During that time he sent letters west to the Corinthian church that was beset with all types of problems and pride. He told them in 1 Corinthians 13 what was missing in their community life. They were not rooted and grounded in love.

This is always a sobering word to the Pentecostal and charismatic church because in our desire for the restoration and presence of the *charismata* we may be tempted to build on the gifts rather than the Giver, on the sensational above the ethical or moral, on success and numbers rather than love.

- If we speak in tongues and do not have love, it is just a headache noise to God, a resounding gong or clanging cymbal.
- If we fathom all mysteries and knowledge, but have not love we are left with massive egos and abusive personalities.
- If we can prophesy and preach without love, we might as well pack up and go home.
- If we have faith to move mountains but without love, we have a loveless faith. What good is a goal-oriented, task-focused, success-driven minister without love?
- If we give everything away, but do not do it from a motive of love, what good is it?
- Even if we give our lives for Christ, becoming a martyr but do it without love, we gain nothing.

But, when we are rooted and grounded in love — then we can ...

Grasp the breadth of His love. It is wide. It begins before the stream of time and flows into the ocean of eternity. It is not a narrow love. It embraces all ethnicities, all ages, male, and female. There is not a single person God does not love.

Grasp the duration of His love. It is long. The songwriter put it well:

- "Could we with ink the ocean fill,
- And were the skies of parchment made;
- Were every stalk on earth a quill,
- And every man a scribe by trade;
- To write the love of God above

Would drain the ocean dry; Nor could the scroll

contain the whole, Though stretched from sky to sky."¹

Grasp the extremity of His love. It is deep. I learned a wonderful hymn in seminary and have not heard much since. Samuel Trevor Francis is

the writer. One cold winter night, at a point in life when his faith wavered, Francis found himself walking across London's Hungerford Bridge. Mulling over his sadness and loneliness, he heard a whisper tempting him to end his misery and jump into the churning waters below. Fortunately, Francis did not heed the dark voice. Instead, he heard God's reassuring words speaking to him in the night. On that bridge he reaffirmed his faith in Jesus Christ and then wrote: "O the deep, deep love of Jesus, vast, unmeasured, boundless, free!"²

May the Spirit help us grasp the width, length, height, and depth of the love of Christ that brought Him out of the ivory palaces into a world of woe, to Bethlehem's manger, Nazareth's small village, Calvary's cruel cross, and Easter's empty tomb. May we say with Paul, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38,39).

3. Grow. "That you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

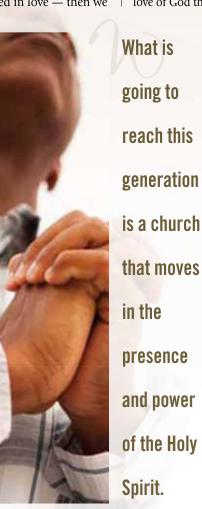
No prayer has ever been framed that has uttered a bolder request. Placing the fullness of God into you and me is like trying to empty an ocean into a thimble. How does this filling-up process happen? Through the Spirit.

When Paul first came to Ephesus, he met 12 disciples (Acts 19:1). They had an incomplete experience. They were saved. They were inside the door, but they were not making progress in winning the city. Paul asked, "Having believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit?" (verse 2, literal meaning).

There is a great deal of talk today about the emerging church. I realize that in every generation the church must find ways to reach people while remaining faithful to apostolic doctrine. However, what is going to reach this generation is a church that moves in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The question we must keep asking is simply the one Paul asked at Ephesus: "Having believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit?"

When the 12 received and were all baptized in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues, revival came to Ephesus. In a short time the

whole city was shaken. A nonevangelizing, nongrowing Pentecostal church is a contradiction in terms. Pentecost is about being filled-up to be empowered as a witness. But Paul knew that being filled with the Spirit was not just a one-time "I've got it" experience. When you read the last two and one-half



chapters of Ephesians, you can see that these Spirit-baptized believers were still being pushed to grow. They are being told what to put off, and what to put on. Paul admonished them to stay continually full of the Spirit, and to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

No matter what our age, our years of Christian service, our maturity in ministry, we will always need to keep on growing because even if we are filled now, we are not yet filled with all the fullness of God. He is infinite and capable of giving more; and we are expansible and capable of receiving more.

THE WOW AT THE END

The grip. The grasp. The grow. But that is not all. He "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20).

Think of it — *immeasurably more*.

I would be happy at times if the Lord answered my prayer and then added another inch of answer. Better yet, 12 inches. Even better — a yard. How about a full tape measure of 6 feet in answer beyond my request? I can measure all those things. But, Paul says, "Immeasurably more." Let us believe the Lord for this as we pray for grip, grasp, and grow.

Great praying leads to great power — "He is able," Paul says. And great power leads to great praise. "To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).



GEORGE O. WOOD, D.TH.P. is general superintendent of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri

NOTES

1. Frederick Lehman, *The Love of God* (1919). 2. Samuel Trevor Francis, *Oh, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus* (1875).



HOW TO REGAIN YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

By Richard D. Dobbins

ILLUSTRATED BY GARY LOCKE

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING OUT FROM UNDER THE UNBEARABLE YOKE AND THE INSUFFERABLE BURDEN OF MINISTRY OVERLOAD.

"Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you

rest. Take My yo<mark>ke up</mark>on you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart,

and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"

If we believe surveys on the Internet, there is an obvious disconnect between this Scripture and the real world of ministry today. Surveys tell us that almost 20,000 ministers in the United States leave the ministry every year. That is over 1,500 every month. This does not include those who are so discouraged they would leave the ministry if they thought they could make a living any other way.

This disillusionment with the ministry begins early in a minister's experience. For example, over three-fourths of those who graduate from seminary and Bible school each year leave the ministry within the first 5 years.

The reasons those surveyed gave concerning why they left the ministry are many and varied, but most pastors said they were shocked to discover the ministry was different from what they thought it would be. They anticipated they would spend more time preaching and teaching, things they enjoy. They did not anticipate the demands of business and personnel management the ministry requires. Pastors grow weary with people's prob-



lems and problem people. They are tired of cantankerous board members, elders, and deacons challenging their authority and draining their energies. They do not like having

(Matthew 11:28-30, NKJV).1

to confront staff who are not working up to speed. They are tired of having to put up with overly sensitive worship leaders.

Over time, these frustrations take a toll on the minister who has not developed ways for discharging accumulating stress. Ministers need to be aware that stress in many ways is to them what black lung is to the coal miner. You do not know you have it until it has you. As the complexities of modern living increase, the stress trap for American ministers grows exponentially more treacherous.

Dealing proactively with the stress of ministry requires less effort and heartache than dealing with it reactively. And, it also spares ministers the agonizing consequences of allowing stress to drive them from ministry.

Ministry, however, does not have to be so overwhelmingly difficult. Remember, the Lord said, *"My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* Here are some suggestions for getting out from under the unbearable yoke and the insufferable burden.

KEEP YOUR EXPECTATIONS REALISTIC

Many enter the ministry with unrealistic expectations. You can measure your frustration with any pursuit by the distance between what you expected from that pursuit and what you experienced. The ministry is no exception.

Why are our expectations of ministry so different from what we actually experience? A major reason is the romanticized way in which many view ministry. While growing up in the church I remember what a special person everyone believed the pastor to be. Most members put him on a pedestal. After all, for them he was a platform personality who was inspiring and helpful. They knew little about other aspects of his work experience or family life.

Preaching and teaching, however, are only a small part of the modern pas-

Why are our expectations of ministry so different from what we actually

experience?

tor's job. Pastors devote most of their time and energy to administrative tasks. Often this involves dealing with people in difficult circumstances. And, many pastors naïvely expect God's people to be spiritual and easy to work with in sensitive situations.

When tension and conflict confront pastors, they expect God's people to be spiritual. They are not always spiritual;

they are sometimes carnal. Adjusting your expectations accordingly will spare you much pain. If you expect church people to be spiritual, you are going to

Becoming Strong Again (continued from page 51)

be disappointed and frustrated most of the time.

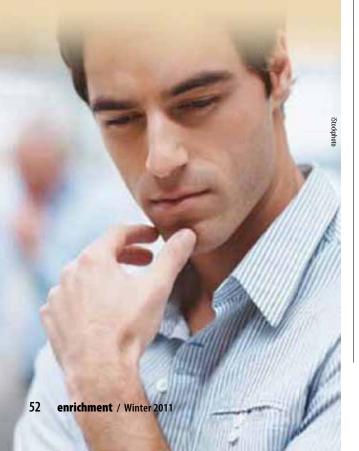
In all three synoptic Gospels Jesus reminds us, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12, NKJV; see also Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31). God has not called us to minister to spiritually healthy people. In most cases, people bring into the Kingdom selfish immaturity, wounded histories, and long-standing hurtful habits. Being born again does not instantaneously cure these.

In His parables, Jesus tried to prepare His disciples for



As you close your workday, mentally rehearse it. Remember, we do not live with the facts of our lives. We live with the story we

tell ourselves about the facts of our lives. We cannot alter the facts, but we can edit the story we tell ourselves about them. The enemy has his version that will stimulate anxiety, anger, and guilt. The Lord has a version that will calm your fears, give you peace, and let you enjoy the evening with your family. Ask Him to help you silence the enemy's version and embrace His.



dealing with the carnality of church people. He wanted their expectations of ministry to be realistic and practical. So, He talked about tares growing up with wheat, good fish and bad fish caught in the same net, and all kinds of birds perching in the same tree (Matthew 13:25–32,47–50).

If we had pastored the first-century church, our congregants would have been carnal. For example, the apostles wrote almost all of the Epistles in the New Testament to confront some kind of carnality. Imagine how many books would be missing from the Bible if God's people had been spiritual.

So, when people challenge your authority, do not see this as a personal crisis. People have questioned the authority of church leadership for 2,000 years. And, when no one remembers your birthday, your spouse's birthday, your wedding anniversary, or your Christmas bonus, do not *catastrophize* this. *Normalize* it. These are nice, but not necessary.

We appreciate expressions of generosity when people extend them. However, it is easy to feel entitled to them. I doubt if the apostles received such consideration.

As you lower your expectations, you will be surprised how much less stressful the ministry becomes. When you expect nothing and receive something, you are pleasantly surprised. We are called to serve, not to be served. Remember, serving people is the minister's way of serving the Lord. And, Jesus said, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40, NKJV).

REFRESH YOUR DEVOTIONAL LIFE

Dealing with budgets, administrative tasks, and problem people can become so energy demanding and time consuming it is easy to neglect your devotional life. Is your Bible reading limited to preparing sermons and Bible studies? Apart from praying for others in your role as a minister, are you opening your heart to the Lord in prayer?

Remember, Isaiah said, "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). Waiting on the Lord includes reading God's Word and prayer, but it also includes reflection and meditation.

RETREAT FROM INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURE

Focus on serving the body of Christ. Do not get caught up in climbing the ladder of ministerial success. Remember, the institutional church is an organization. The body of Christ is an organism. Denominations tend to be self-serving and self-perpetuating. They do credential ministers to preach and serve other useful functions. They keep us accountable, protect us from heresy, and enable us to do things together that none of us could do by ourselves. God, however, calls us to serve His body more than the institutional church.



As you lower your expectations, you will be surprised how

much less stressful the ministry becomes.

Over the years I learned a practical pattern for applying this Scripture to my thought life. Here is a series of questions I ask myself

If you allow yourself to focus on the inconsistencies and unfairness found in the dealings of the institutional church, you can feel frustrated and depressed much of the time. You will see those who are well-connected in the political process of the denomination receive favors. At the same time you will see many deserving ministers in smaller churches go unrecognized.

But, we have Jesus' word that anyone giving as little as a cup of cold water in His name will not go without reward (Matthew 10:42). Remember, Jesus is the One who calls us into ministry. Believing He will see that you are appropriately rewarded for faithfully ministering to people will keep you free from judging others and being envious or jealous of them.

Remember what Jesus said to Peter when he seemed unreasonably concerned about Jesus favoring John: "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me" (John 21:22). Seeing ministry as a way of following Jesus simplifies your life.

REFLECT ON YOUR CURRENT SITUATION

Reflect on your situation and open your mind to the insights and creative solutions only Jesus can share with you. What about your current situation is so stressful? Are you in over your head financially? Have you inherited a troubled situation created by the former pastor? Are there warring factions in the congregation? Prayerfully write down the things that most trouble you. Prioritize that list. Focus on the most troubling. Then, commit to write ways you envision managing the most troublesome.

Ask yourself, *If I acted on my first option, what would my situation be like in 6 months, a year, and then 18 months?* Remember, Satan wants to use your impulsivity and your exaggerated sense of urgency to make matters more complicated. But as you extend your second, third, and fourth options through this same process, ask God to share His wisdom with you in choosing which to follow. We have His Word that He will (James 1:5).

Put as much emotional distance between you and your situation as you can. Avoid premature solutions of your own making. Then, trust God to give you an increasing urge toward the option He considers to be wisest in resolving your issues.

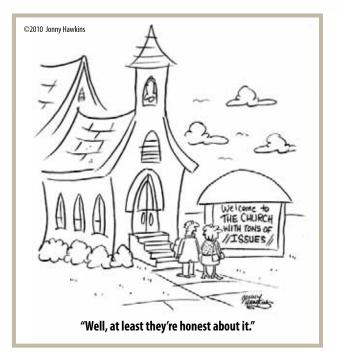
Peter gives us some wisdom: "So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in his good time he will honor you. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you" (1 Peter 5:6,7, NLT).² in determining what my responsibility is and what cares I can cast on Him:

1. Can anything be done about what is troubling me? It is possible to become troubled about matters for which there are no solutions. There will always be wars. There will always be poverty. Some godly people will die from their disease while some carnal ones will be healed. No one can do anything about that. So, when I find myself troubled by these things, I cast these cares on Him.

2. Can I do anything about what is troubling me? If I find myself distressed by matters about which I can do nothing, I cast these cares upon Him. At times, I can do something about what is troubling me. I define what that is and go on to the next question.

3. Can I do anything about it now? If I cannot do anything about what is troubling me now, I make a note in my calendar that reminds me what I can do and when I can do it. Everything else I cast on Him.

Notice the forcefulness of that word *cast*. Learn to mentally hurl out of your mind those things you cannot do anything about now. Following through by doing what you can do at a time when you can do it will carry the reward of healthy leadership.



Becoming Strong Again (continued from page 53)

REFOCUS ON YOUR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Marriage gives the pastor and his wife opportunity to model a healthy Christian marriage before those they serve. It is never God's will for your ministry to harm your marriage. Unfortunately, some ministers consider themselves married to the ministry and use this misguided priority to explain their neglect of their spouses and children. Paul clearly outlines the



minister's biblical priorities in Ephesians 5:21 through 6:4. God comes first. Your marriage comes second. Your children come third. And your work is fourth.

One of the best things you can do for your ministry and your children is to plan two or three marriage retreats each year. During these weekends enjoy prayer and devotions, but agree there will be no discussing church affairs. Simply focus on renewing your love for God and each other. Your wife will love it and your children will enjoy the difference it makes in your relationships with them. A healthy minister knows that marriage comes before the ministry ... and so do the children. So do not allow the enemy to make you feel guilty for protecting these priorities.

When your day is done, develop the ability to mentally close the door on concerns about the church and open the door to enjoying your marriage and family. Have an understanding between you and your spouse that you will not discuss church matters at home. This is not only healthy for your marriage; it is also healthy for your children. As much as possible, you should protect them from painful situations you are dealing with in the church.

RECREATION IS A PART OF YOUR MINISTRY

Nature teaches us the importance of recreation. Calves leap, foals frolic, sheep play in the field, dogs chase balls, and kittens play with yarn. Do not let the enemy make you feel guilty for taking time to play. Play to have fun ... not to win. Playing with some-

When your day is done, develop the ability to mentally close the door on concerns about the church and open the door to enjoying your marriage and family. body who has to win is not fun.

Find some things you and your spouse enjoy and do them together three or four times a month. Have at least one fun night for the family each week when your children are small. Do not force them to do what is fun for you. Do what is fun for them.

God did not call you into the ministry to frustrate you. He wants the ministry to fulfill His will. He wants you to enjoy the work of the Lord. Choose your friends carefully. Avoid those people who chafe under the yoke of ministry. When you leave them, you feel drained. Sometimes it is necessary to minister to people like this. However, choose your friends from those who love the Lord,

enjoy life, and energize you in your times together.

Remember Paul's admonition: "So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time. Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters" (Galatians 6:9,10).



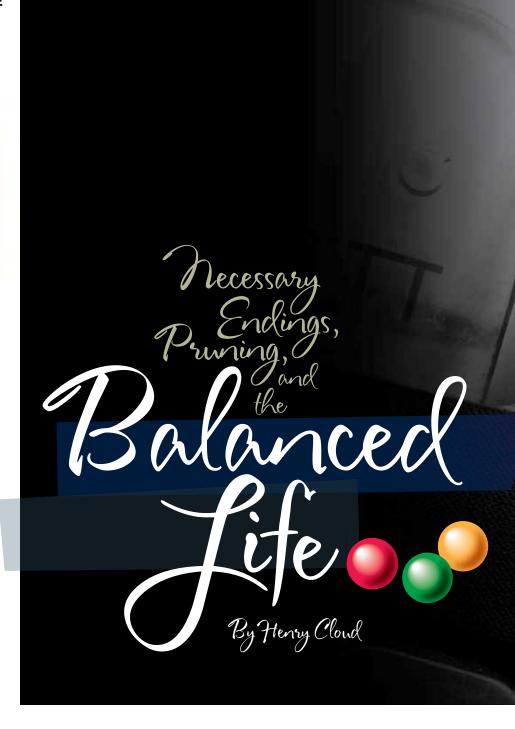
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NOTES

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The tempting way to look at balance is the easiest. In this approach you figure out the aspects of life you want to include — God, family, ministry, health, recreation, community, hobbies, growth — and put them in a grid. Then you figure out the time you will give each of them.



In my experience in coaching leaders, executing a balanced life is always more difficult than planning one.

Imbalance often comes from two sources. First, you have too much to do. Too many meetings, too many relationships, too many tasks pull in too many directions. Second, and this may be the bigger of the two: a few big problems (usually with a name and Social Security number) are taking more of



your time and energy (or at least more than their fair share) than the rest of the people and projects. Doing too much and doing too much of the wrong thing are two of the biggest culprits to an imbalanced life. There is an answer; it is a new kind of balancing. It is one I see effective leaders implementing as an ongoing practice — pruning. Here is how it works.

Gardeners know that nothing grows to fruition without pruning. A rosebush will never produce a beautiful rose unless the gardener prunes it. If he does not prune it, the plant will produce many roses, but they will be scattered and formless. Pruning gives roses form and shape.

Further into the pruning strategy is where the big "ahas" are for our lives. A gardener prunes a bud or a branch for three reasons.

First, a rosebush creates more buds than it can sustain. The

ARE THERE VITAL PARTS OF YOUR LIFE AND MINISTRY THAT ARE OUT OF BALANCE AND NOT Getting the best of your time and energy? Here are three wake-up questions to ask.

END.

bush does not have enough resources to feed all of these buds and bring them to full maturity. So the gardener must pick out the best buds and prune the rest. Not that these buds were not alive, nor even good. But they were not the *best*, and the plant needed its resources for the best.

THE

Second, the gardener picks branches that are sick or diseased, but are *not going to get well*. After doing what he can to help them — and if this does not help — he clips them so healthy ones can have what the bush has to offer. The sick branches have been hurting the rest of the bush and taking up valuable resources.

Third, there are branches that are dead and in the way. Good

branches need room to stretch and grow, but they are constantly working to get past the dead ones. So the gardener gets these dead branches out of the way by pruning them.

Those strategies: stopping what is good but not best, stopping what is sick and not getting well, and stopping what has no life left in it will not only ensure a healthy rosebush, *but they will go a long way to fixing an imbalanced life and ministry as well.*

In my experience, leaders, ministries, and businesses are a lot like rosebushes. Over time they have three distinct needs for pruning; and, if leaders do not prune, they will find themselves unable to have a sustainable and balanced life.

First, over time a church creates more activities and ministries

Necessary Endings, Priving, and the Balanced Fife (continued from page 57)

than it can feed and nurture. Some have seen their best days. Some were right for a time, and their season has passed. Likewise, a person gathers relationships over the years that take time and energy; some were right and good for a season, but that season has passed.

I was talking to a leader and his wife about one of their small groups. They had joined it many years ago and had found it to be fruitful at that time. But now, years later, it was taking valuable time and energy from them as a couple and it no longer fit their needs. It was time for them to prune that group and have these resources of time and energy available for other areas.

A pastor told me he and his team had a planning retreat and figured out that over the years the church had been good at starting ministries, but not so good at shutting them down. As a result, they went through a pruning process and discovered a new season of energy. They finally had resources available for the best programs.

If you are trimming your work and personal activities down to those that contribute to excellence, then you will have time for all the categories in your planner. But without pruning, as time goes on, you gather more activities than you can feed, and balance will be hard to find. Here are your three wake-up questions:



The second distinct need for pruning may be relationships and programs that, like diseased branches, are sick and not getting well. I am referring to those situations *where you have done all that you can do, given grace upon grace, truth upon truth, resource upon resource, and nothing helps.* Some people are in denial and are not receiving your attempts to help. With some projects or strategies, you have done all you can do to make them work and reality is tell-

ing you they are not getting better. In those situations, where someone is not doing his part, or an idea is just not going to work, it may be time to prune.

Leaders who do this often find that the balance they have been seeking suddenly appears. The energy drain of that difficult person in denial or that project that just never would work is finally gone. Time and energy are suddenly available for the relationships that use it and the projects that merit it. Both quantitatively and qualitatively, things get better. I often hear leaders say, "I should have fired him a long time ago. I don't know what took me so long; but, now that he is gone, everything is better."

Sometimes a person is not ready to hear what he needs to hear and make the changes he needs to make. At other times, we are in love with a bad idea or strategy. When we finally can make that hard decision, the healthy roses in our lives finally get the best we have.



The third distinct need for pruning are the branches that are dead and need to be removed to give the space for things that have life. One leader told me this was the hardest decision he had to make: To let go of some programs he had known had been dead for a long time, but to which some long-term members were emotionally attached. It was a struggle to get rid of these programs, but doing this paved the way for other more current initiatives to grow.

If you try to help a hoarder throw things out, you run into two resistances every time you pick up something he never uses and toss it in the garbage. The first one is, "No! Don't throw that away. I might need it!" He hasn't used it in 20 years, but he thinks that tomorrow he will need it. He is afraid to let go. Some ministries are like that.

The second resistance is, "No! Don't throw that away. That was such a special time when Jason was a baby. This is his first disposable diaper." People get emotionally attached to projects and programs that no longer have a purpose. Some activities have been dead for a long time and are just taking up space. Let go.



On a personal and professional basis, ask yourself the previous three questions. You will find some keys to the question of both balance and sustainable excellence. When we prune, we find more quantity of time, energy, and resources to spend, and we begin to spend them on better quality endeavors. That is the essence of stewardship.

These necessary endings are a part of life. Ecclesiastes 3, for example, is full of the necessity

of ending things whose time is over. "To everything ... there is a season," the Byrds, a 60s American folk rock band, sang from Solomon's wisdom. There is "a time to plant, a time to reap. ... A time you may embrace, a time to refrain from embracing."

If we are going to be in tune with the way God designed life, we need to get comfortable with the necessary endings we need to execute.

God has called us to make the most of our time (Ephesians 5:15,16) and to give ourselves wholeheartedly to that which is good. Sometimes that means we must make some hard calls,



Are there some good programs, or even people, who should go away? Are there others that are not getting well, no matter what you try? And are there still others whose days have long passed?

to step up and create some necessary endings.

I am sure Abraham disappointed some people when he left Ur. And Lot, when he left Sodom. Or Paul, when he left his influential relationships and Jewish networks to follow the Way. Yet, all of these people of faith knew there were good things to give themselves to, and then there were the best things. They knew some were not good, and still others were dead. In any case, they stepped out in faith and executed the necessary endings required to get to the next place God had for them.

So, if you are out of balance, and the parts of life and ministry that are vital are not getting the best of your time and energy, you may need some pruning. You might find that when you get that space back you begin to regain the balance you have been seeking. And best of all, it will have a focus of sustainable excellence. What could be better than that?

Sit down with your planner. But this time, do it with some scissors in hand, ready to cut out things that should not be in there anymore. *Do not just assume you need to find a place for all you are doing*. Some of that stuff may need to be pruned.

And, do the same with your team. Ask some hard questions about what your ministry is involved in. Are there some good programs, or even people, who should go away? Are there others that are not getting well, no matter what you try? And are there still others

whose days have long passed? Chances are, if the ministry is truly alive, the answer is yes. Everything that is alive needs pruning. Then, and only then, will it thrive over time. Step up, and do the "necessary endings" that will bring your balance back. @

(For more on this topic, see *Necessary Endings*, Henry Cloud, Harper Collins Publishers, 2010.)



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- Prune, just like a gardener prunes a rosebush. If you are creating more projects and going in more directions than you can maintain, pick the best and prune the rest.
- Be aware of projects that are not going anywhere and lack momentum. It may be time to end them and make room for more valuable projects.
- Remember that endings are necessary and will help lead to fixing an imbalanced life and ministry.
- It is good to be patient, forgiving, and persevere. It is also good to be aware of when you have given all you can give and accept that you cannot fix everything.
- Remember to make the most of your time and give yourself wholeheartedly to what you choose to do.
- Do not let your fear control your calendar. If a program or relationship is not working, acknowledge that it may be time to prune and make way for things that will work.
- It is never easy to say goodbye, but by executing the necessary endings you are allowing yourself and the other person to get to the next place God has for him.

— HENRY CLOUD, Ph.D.



By Byron Klaus

Gordon MacDonald tells of browsing through an old bookstore with his wife hoping to find some treasures from the past. Together they found a biography of Daniel Webster written in 1840. They bought it, eager to glean new insights into this venerable American icon. While it had a worn cover and obviously someone had used it for generations, they discovered the book had been printed poorly. Previous owners had to cut apart many pages with scissors to read them; and, the more the MacDonalds investigated, the more they realized this book may have been used, but had rarely been read. The Christian leader who has not grown intellectually through life is akin to the book described in this story. A leader's life may have some value that others can easily observe, but not nearly the long-term influence that might be possible if he had sharpened his intellect and developed it to its full potential.¹

God's call on my life has included ample opportunity to live in the tension that the prophet Isaiah described as spirit of wisdom and knowledge: a somewhat delicate balance between passion/ zeal and the conceptual world of the intellect (see Isaiah 11:2). I have learned to live in the intersection between two tension points: on the one hand, a belief in Zechariah's prophetic insight that



ministry of eternal consequence is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit (Zechariah 4:6); and, on the other hand, Paul's



A leader's life may have some value that others can easily observe, but not nearly the long-term

influence that is possible if he sharpens his intellect and develops it to its full potential.

instruction to Timothy to study with thoroughness so he could carefully and reasonably present the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15).

I have attempted to be obedient to God's call to work in educational institutions that shape Pentecostal leaders with a *both-and posture*. At times, I feel like the proverbial frog the Swiss Pentecostal, Walter Hollenweger, describes in his *Prayer of a Frog*. Hollenweger muses about his life as a Pentecostal in the great universities of Europe, "O God, You made me an in-between being, but it is a tough job. Sometimes I am confused and terrified; strengthen my faith so that I am a cheerful in-between creature, a happy frog." $^{\prime\prime 2}$

TENSION POINTS

We tend to play out much of the tension in Pentecostal life, with respect to the care of the intellect, with stereotypes that conveniently allow us to dismiss obvious tensions using anecdotal evidence that confirms our personal assumptions. The passionate Pentecostal can easily recall the abstract, obtuse explanation of a seemingly simple question or principle that a more "cerebral" colleague has given — leaving listeners with eyes glazed over in confusion. The Pentecostal who values intellectual thoroughness can painfully remember the minimal attention to key interpretive frameworks for a biblical text that simply left a congregation with wrong conclusions and simplistic answers.

I have observed both ends of the spectrum and believe we need not live in this world of polar opposites. The Pentecostal tradition can avoid both confusing intellectual abstraction and mindless unfocused passion. To allow the points of tension to remain in play is to neutralize an incredible contribution that Pentecostals have to make to 21st-century Christianity.

Caring for Your Intellect Ncontinued from page 61)

I believe there are guidelines for Pentecostals to turn the tensions we have all experienced into dimensions of dynamic interplay that do not debilitate, but enhance the strength of our tradition. For example, some might argue that historically people have seen Pentecostals more as doers than for intellectual prowess. Allow me an alternative view of that conventional wisdom.

Late in the 19th century, as the modern missionary movement was having growing results, there was much strategizing about how this global missionary effort might be done even more rapidly and effectively. The keen passion among a committed group of mission-minded people included a deep desire to see the restoration of the Spirit's power as taught and illustrated in the New Testament. The appearance of the Pentecostal Movement in the early 20th century and its central commitment to evangelize the world were not merely about a group of zealous folks who were radical, sacrificial, and gung-ho to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

What our early forebears affirmed was a belief in the need for a subsequent spiritual empowerment that sent the recipient toward a destiny connected to the continuing redemptive mission of Jesus Christ. The empowerment was for the purpose of world evangelism, and the soon return of Christ made it necessary to "work while it is day" (John 9:4). Signs and wonders, empowered by the Holy Spirit, accompanied this work, thus energizing missionary efforts and hastening the return of Christ.

The late Pentecostal historian, Gary McGee, suggests that this new "radical strategy" was not merely some sort of "Holy Ghost breakdown"; it was a theological critique on the whole of 19th-century missionary endeavor that resulted in what McGee called the *radical strategy*.³ Far from a mindless but passionate activity, this was a vibrant theological statement that was akin to Peter's deeply spiritual evaluation of the events on the Day of Pentecost when he spoke those stirring words filled with magnificent biblical insight, "This is that" (Acts 2:16).

MODELS OF EQUILIBRIUM IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

The first few verses of Acts 13 provide another picture with deep implications for 21st-century Pentecostal leadership. The church at Antioch was a new and out-of-the-box initiative that was thriving, but causing no lack of concern for the leadership in Jerusalem. Antioch had taken their evangelistic efforts to new groups of people who had no Jewish connections. The church was thriving under the leadership of Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus.

Chapter 13 begins with a key description of the nature of leadership in Antioch. Luke described for his readers the fact *prophets and teachers* were central to what made this church thrive. Clearly, Antioch had a vital combination of enduring solid biblical grounding and a sense of discerning the dynamic of the present tense of Jesus at work by the power of the Spirit. Luke noted the presence of both prophets and teachers in the context of the regular discipline of worship and fasting that results in clear direction by the Holy Spirit to set apart Barnabas and Saul for a special new initiative.

The quick glimpse into this vital New Testament church provides a key insight: we do not need to hamstring vital spiritual experience by thoroughness in biblical foundations. In fact, we can draw a reasonable conclusion that the Antioch church, with its combination of vital spiritual experience and deep rooted-

The Pentecostal tradition can avoid both confusing intellectual abstraction and mindless unfocused passion. ness in Scripture, was the model the Spirit clearly wanted replicated as the Antioch church commissioned Barnabas and Saul for what we term Paul's first missionary journey.

Acts 13 and 14 describe this first missionary effort and the resulting churches that Paul and Barnabas established. At the beginning of Acts 15, we see a deeply theological problem come to a head. The future of the Church is at stake as the nature of salvation is in sharp dispute. The issue being disputed is whether a person must become a Jew, in the pattern Moses had taught, as a prerequisite to salvation or whether any person of any culture could, by faith in Christ alone, receive salvation.

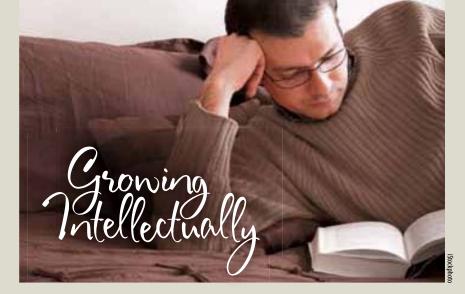
The Jerusalem Council is not really about a controversy over missionary strategy or pragmatic methodology. Barnabas and Paul rooted their strategy in a deep-seated biblical belief that salvation was by faith alone. This is not a small matter. While they recount the incredible impact of the gospel on Gentiles through signs and wonders, they are simultaneously shaping and clarifying the nature of the Church's understanding of salvation.

As Peter and James weighed into the discussion, they helped formulate the biblical foundations for the continuing vitality of the expansion of the Church. Acts 13–15 gives us a wonderful case study of how Pentecostal leadership can thrive. Reliance on God's supernatural power to transform people, joined with keen minds that recognize the enduring issues at stake, is the clear pattern worth emulating (13:2 and 15:12–18).

The Acts 17:16–34 account of Paul's preaching in Athens provides another affirmation of the effectiveness of keeping our intellect sharp as part of continued effectiveness in ministry. Paul's ministry in Athens shows a clear understanding of Growing edges intellectually do not happen automatically. We need to be intentional about stimulating our intellect in a way that will serve our existing interests, but challenge areas of our lives where we need to move out of comfort zones. Because of the capability to have access to the volume of information available today you need discernment to access what truly will help you grow. Pursuing the novel may be fun, but not the best use of your limited time.

Serve existing interests by not only reading/accessing resources recommended to you by colleagues, but doing some exploring yourself. Do more than Google a topic. Access Web sites of publishing companies from whom you usually do not buy books. Read in-depth reviews of books, not just customer reviews. These reviews are available at www.booksandculture.com.

If you read leadership literature, include sturdy biographies of great historic leaders. Have you read the stories of great missionary leaders like J. Hudson Taylor, William Carey, David Brainerd, The Cambridge Seven, or D.L. Moody? How about great American leaders



like George Washington, John Adams? But move beyond Christian leaders to great living world leaders like South Africa's Nelson Mandela and Singapore's Lee Kwan Yew. Gaining historic understanding of leaders through the ages helps you understand that you are not the first to face incredible challenges.

Move out of comfort zones. Read biblical literature from faith traditions that are not necessarily affirming of Pentecostal perspective. The varied perspectives that influence church attendees today are quite broad. Awareness of varying opinions on key issues like biblical authority, Atonement, and Spirit baptism are important so your communication can be more informed and specifically address different vantage points. Consider church leadership and ministry information that comes from sources you may not access on a regular basis. While you may have doctrinal differences with these sources, you may be surprised at the insights you obtain. Several of the bestresearched ministry Web sites include www.faithandleadership.com and www. pulpitandpew.org.

Can you systematically and reasonably present (to anyone who might ask) an overview of where you stand on such controversial issues as same-sex marriage, domestic violence, the Bible's authority, and the exclusive claims of salvation through Christ alone?

- BYRON KLAUS, D.Min.

the cultural awareness Paul had of his surroundings, as this passage reveals glimpses into life in Athens. He is aware of the Athenian's religious and aesthetic values and highlights this in his discussions with intellectuals at the Areopagus (Mars Hill). He uses both the aesthetic and religious assumptions of the privileged class he is in dialogue with to frame his talking points. However, this is not simply a case study in the intellectual prowess of Paul or the need to be well-read to impress the people to whom you are presenting the claims of Christ. Paul is obviously intellectually astute and a clear match for his dialogue partners, but this is merely the framework for him to present the eternal truth of the clear superiority of Jesus Christ as seen in the Resurrection.

The common language Paul can speak with this group of well-heeled Athenians is clearly a necessary tool and he does it well. But Paul is making his point that their system of life is lacking and God has put up with their "ignorance" long enough. It was time for them to see the light and repent (verse 30). Paul joins bold proclamation of the gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit with the clear conceptual framework that he lays in his encounter with the elite of Athens. Again, we see the pattern of reliance on God's supernatural power to transform lives joined with a keen mind to recognize the enduring issues at stake in the context.

JOHN WESLEY: PROTO-PENTECOSTAL?

John Wesley is arguably the most helpful historical figure that provides for us a combined model of pastoral excellence with keen intellect. Wesley spent his early life in the parsonage of a long-term pastor. His father, Samuel, pastored the same congregation for 39 years, and with his wife, Susannah, raised 18 children. John and his brother Charles had the privilege of a wonderful education at Oxford University's Lincoln College. John's spiritual journey led him to a variety of experiences including missionary work among Native Americans in what is now the state of Georgia. Upon his return to England he met some Moravian missionaries whose spiritual lives deeply impacted his life and under whose influence he testifies to a conversion experience.

As Wesley's influence grew, his foundational principles for

Caring for Your Intellect Ncontinued from page 63)

ministry came to be known as the *Wesleyan Quadrilateral*.⁴ These four pillars provide a significant template for our consideration. The first pillar of the Quadrilateral was the *primacy of Scripture*. We clearly see his passion for Scripture when he says, "O give me that book, at any price give me the book of God."

The second pillar for Wesley was what he called *the authority of tradition*. In an age where revolution was destroying all sense of tradition and authority, Wesley argued that Christians must value their connections to believers of all preceding ages. He believed their experience was a critical source for understanding contemporary life and ministry and a hedge against repeating

The final pillar for Wesley was the *authority of experience*. The vibrancy of faith that Wesley affirmed is one of his enduring contributions to Christian life. He integrated his deep commitment to strategies for maturing disciples into his belief that an encounter with God's empowering Spirit was necessary for Christian maturity. Wesley said, "It is necessary that you have the hearing ear and the seeing eye, that you have a new class of senses opened to your soul not depending on organs of flesh and blood to be evidence of things not seen. ... to discern spiritual objects and to furnish you with ideas of what the outward eye has not seen neither the ear heard."

The effectiveness of John Wesley and his long-term minis-



Wesley's life and example deserve serious consideration for Pentecostals who seek to embody the vibrancy of spiritual encounter with God and the breadth of thoroughness in conceptual rigor.

try throughout England is one of the enduring examples of a both-and person. His spiritual vitality was alive and profound and his intellect was a source of breadth and depth in understanding the significance of what was spiritually at stake in his era. Wesley understood his calling in God's plan when he said, "I'm not afraid that the people called Methodist should ever cease to exist. I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion with-out the power." Wesley's life and example and particularly his Quadrilateral deserve serious consideration for Pentecostals who seek to embody the vibrancy of spiritual sceptual rigor.

past mistakes. He believed believers must acknowledge the Holy Spirit who orchestrated the continuing redemptive mission of Jesus Christ throughout history. Wesley said, "If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God. Then the writings, whereby being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach."

The third pillar for Wesley was the *authority of reason*. While we can understand how a person in the middle of the Age of Enlightenment would make such a claim, Wesley is simply suggesting that we acknowledge the full use of a faculty God gave us. He is willing to live in the tension that this pillar must navigate. Wesley says, "Let reason do all that reason can. Employ it as far as it will go. But at the same time, acknowledge it is utterly incapable of giving faith or love and consequently of producing real virtue or substantive happiness. Expect these from a higher source."

CONTEMPORARY OPPORTUNITIES

Ralph Riggs is a shining example in Assemblies of God history of a leader who valued a both-and approach to leadership development and effectiveness. In an era when people might have viewed a bright mind with suspicion, Riggs said, "Preparation for the ministry should begin at the moment when we sense the call upon us. It should never end."⁵ He spent a lifetime championing a truly Pentecostal perspective which affirms that sustaining excellence in life and ministry includes caring for the intellect. Riggs' life was the deepest of commitments to champion this principle because, in so doing, he made a huge contribution to all of Christianity.

The biblical example of the apostle Paul and the historical examples of Wesley and Riggs testify to deep spirituality as well as sharp intellect. Their lives testify to the enduring influence and effectiveness in ministry that a both-and combination can bring. Thomas Aquinas said, "We can be clear in our actions only if, first of all, we are clear in our thought."



The vitality of our Pentecostal heritage can sometimes cause us to wonder why preparatory training and continuing growth include so much abstract stuff, while so many people with real problems demand attention right now.

Our effectiveness as leaders depends largely on our proactive immersion into the thick of the battle where hurting lives are everywhere and the needs seem to increase exponentially. We can become impatient with mastering biblical themes, historical lessons, and theological controversies.

The equation for influence over a lifetime is not only a good heart and attitude toward our calling and the ministry God gives us, but the development of enduring pillars of understanding that are timeless and resistant to fads. Thomas Aquinas said, "We can be clear in our actions only if, first of all, we are clear in our thought." His statement makes it quite plain that action follows vision.

There are times at which we encounter keen insight from secular sources that almost seems to have a prophetic edge. The writer, Edna St. Vincent Millay, offered such insight in 1939. In a poem entitled, "Huntsman, What

Quarry?" she offers a poignant observation that has become more real in the 70-plus years since she wrote these words:

"Upon this age, ... this age endowed with power To wake the moon with footsteps. ... Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour, Rains from the sky a meteoric shower Of facts ... they lie unquestioned, uncombined. Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill Is daily spun; but there exists no loom To weave it into fabric."

I am struck by the insight of this poem. Before space travel put a person on the moon and before the information age was truly in place, some had already defined the problem. St. Vincent Millay sees clearly that we have the information to solve much of the ills of our world. We simply have no loom to weave it into fabric. We live in a world of massive information with little to give meaning to the ever-growing accessibility to mountains of information.

The Pentecostal leader stands as a witness to the gospel that truly is the loom that can weave a redemptive fabric. The testimony of biblical and historical examples is clear. Pentecostal leaders have opportunity to model effectiveness in ministry that makes sense intellectually to a clueless world and does so with reliance on eternal resources that are seen in the miraculous.



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NOTES

- 1. Gordon MacDonald, Ordering Your Private Life (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 109,110.
- Walter Hollenweger, Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 388.
- Gary McGee, "The Radical Strategy in Modern Missions: The Linkage of Paranormal Phenomena With Evangelism," in *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics*, ed. C. Douglas McConnell (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1997), 69–95.
- 4. For a thorough introduction to Wesley's Quadrilateral, see Donald Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Light and Life Publishers, 1990); all Wesley quotes are taken from the writings of Wesley as referenced in Thorsen's volume.
- Ralph Riggs, A Successful Pastor (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1931), 20,21. See also my reference to Riggs and this statement in "Lifelong Learning: Developing Excellence and Finishing Strong" in *Enrichment* journal, Winter 2007, 48.









A MINISTER'S **GUIDE TO** LONG-TERM HEALTH AND WELLNESS

By James T. Bradford ILLUSTRATED BY GARY LOCKE

In my twenties it was easy to think that good health was a birthright of sorts, independent of what I did to my body. My metabolism kept me skinny no matter what I ate, and my energy levels stayed high no matter how hard I pushed myself. I did run for exercise, but not nearly as much as I do today, 30 years later. In short, it was easy to ignore my body and take my health for granted as I went all out

for Jesus.

with me, but theology did as well. Paul did say that spiritual health trumps physical health (1 Timothy 4:8), but he also confronted the excessively low view of the physical body that ran rampant through Greek dualism. "Your body," he said, "is a temple of the Holy Spirit." Furthermore, "You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20, emphasis mine).

Jesus redeemed our spirits and physical bodies at the price of His own blood. He therefore claims ownership to them, making us their stewards. Our bodies also give "sanctuary" or "residence" to the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence. That indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit calls us not only to sexual purity but also to our bodies in a holistic lifestyle of worship. "Honor God with your body," Paul said.

There are pragmatics here as well. Ministry is obviously more of a marathon than a sprint, and our bodies are hardwired into that run. Sometimes low energy, frequent illness, and lethargic attitudes are more than just spiritual warfare. They are a matter of the stewardship of our physical health.

Unfortunately, many of us in ministry are not doing well in this area. Bob Wells of Duke Divinity School puts it rather succinctly: "North American churches have in common not only the Cross and a love of Christ, but also a pastorate whose health is fast becoming cause for concern."

So where do we start? After all, we are really the only ones who can take care of ourselves. Here are three simple, albeit difficult, areas to focus on - rest, diet, and exercise. Let's take them one at a time.

REST

God ingeniously designed our bodies to cope with a wide array of demands, stresses, and energy outlays. The three stages of the classic stress cycle are a great example. The first stage is the trigger experience, a life event that can be either good or bad. Ministry is a virtual minefield of stress triggers and stimuli.

The response or arousal stage follows the trigger stage. We

Caring for Your Body (continued from page 67)

often refer to this as the fight-or-flight phase of stress response. In this aroused state some amazing things begin to happen in our bodies. Our bodies redirect blood flow to the most vital organs of the body. This is why our hands can feel cold when we are stressed. Our body also releases natural painkillers called endorphins into our system. But most remarkably, adrenaline starts pumping into our system, giving us uncharacteristic energy, alertness, and acuity.

The third stage of the stress cycle is the recovery or rest phase. Our systems must let down. During this phase the adrenaline buildup dissipates, creating those post-adrenal blues. This is why pastors can feel emotionally down on Mondays. They are coming down off an adrenaline high. Unfortunately, this also creates a vulnerability to temptation.

This recovery phase is critically important to our long-term health. When we do not give ourselves physical and emotional rest periods after energy-demanding seasons, adrenaline continues to pump through our bodies at unhealthy levels. We can become adrenaline-addicted and start confusing adrenaline with anointing.



At some point we have to decide there is a

difference between self-denial and self-neglect.

This elevated level of adrenaline, over a sustained period of time, leads to cardiovascular problems and heart attacks. The adrenaline damage to the interior of our arteries is akin to corrosion and pitting inside an old pipe. This accelerates artery buildup and clogging. Our immune systems also wear down.

Resting, unfortunately, is not easy for most of us in ministry. If it is not guilt over doing something for ourselves, it is that overwhelming feeling that our work is never done and people's demands never end. There is also a spiritually exhausting gap pastors live with between the way things are and the way we ideally think they should be, making it even harder to slow down.

At some point we have to decide there is a difference between self-denial and self-neglect. Self-denial is our choice to live for Christ rather than for our own ends. Self-neglect is a violation of our stewardship of what God has given us — in this case, our bodies. Learning to rest regularly will require us to deny the reinforcing emotions of our false guilt and the loud voices of other people's expectations. It is crucifying the unhealthy



aspects of our aggressive readiness and our inability to fully trust God with His work.

The simplest rule of thumb is to sleep nightly, stop weekly, and escape annually. I mention sleep first because an alarming number of people in our culture (and the ministry) are living with sleep deprivation. Lack of sleep dulls our thinking, slows our response times, makes us fragile emotionally, and depletes our resistance to sickness.

When it comes to stopping weekly, the cycle of one day in seven is a biblical, healthy, and achievable rhythm. A pastor's weekly day off should obviously not be Sunday. Many take Mondays off; others take Thursdays or another day as their day away from the office. I took Fridays off so I could go into the weekend more rested.

Our English word *recreation* speaks to the true intent of Sabbath — re-creation. This requires rest and reflection, doing things that are unlike work and at a slower pace. Relational time with family and the Lord, as well as doing things that are fun, are all part of a day that is restoring. Physical activity also helps as a counterbalance to the rather sedentary nature of the rest of the ministry week.

Annually it is important to break away from work for longer periods of time so there can be the kind of fuller escape from the demands of ministry. Part of rest is physical; the other is mental and emotional. In general it takes 10 days to 2 weeks

> to truly experience a recovery that our bodies and our souls need. A single 2-week vacation can do more for us than a series of 2- or 3-day breaks throughout the year.

As with a weekly day off, it is also important to structure vacations around activities that are unlike ministry. This might mean less time with nonfamily members and more time doing

physical activities. Reading should also be outside of ministry. I personally like reading biographies of American presidents and physics books on vacation. To each his own, but whatever it takes, take time to rest.

DIET

While regular rest is a baseline activity for the care of our bodies, nutrition is becoming an increasingly important issue in our society given the prevalence of fast food and obesity. Although genetics can affect when, how, and where we gain weight, obesity is becoming a growing problem for ministers as well.

There are many educational resources for good nutrition readily available from doctors, reputable Web sites, and bookstores. While I am not a medical doctor, let me review a few of the basics.

The first is moderating the three Ss — sugar, starch, and seconds. We are not necessarily talking abstinence here, but moderation. Weight gain is related to calories in versus calories out. Excessive sugar in our diets makes this a losing battle. Desserts, candy bars, and sugared soft drinks become our enemies in the proverbial battle of the bulge.

The second S is starch. High-starch diets and the intake of bad carbohydrates contribute to weight gain and chemical imbalance



It is important to structure vacations around activities that are unlike ministry.

of self-control we need to address.

Rather than gorging ourselves, it is actually healthier to eat smaller portions more often. Eating a given number of calories regularly throughout the day, but in smaller amounts, produces less body fat accumulation than eating the same number of calories in two or three large meals. Researchers have also linked skipping breakfast to obesity because of the way this adversely affects the body's metabolism. Breakfast really is the most important meal of the day, recharging both our brains and our bodies.

Part of eating strategically is also eating foods that are high in fiber and low in bad fats. Our bodies need some fats because of the fatty acids they provide. The American Heart Association recommends that 20–35 percent of our caloric intake each day come from fats. Unfortunately Americans average 34 percent of their caloric intake from fat, and some of those are not the good fats.

The bad fats are the saturated and trans fats. Saturated fats are found in meats, butter, cream or ice cream, and foods high in animal fat. Trans fats are man-made and found commonly in fast foods, margarines, and packaged baked goods, like cookies or food bars. Seafood, on the other hand, contains high levels of omega-3 fats and provides the best-for-you fats available.

EXERCISE

When it comes to moderating weight gain and maintaining good health, the most succinct piece of advice is to eat less and move more. It is a common misconception that exercise or diet alone will solve our problems. The combination of the two, along with adequate rest, is the best prescription for taking good care of our bodies.

As with diet, the thought of regular exercise depresses most people, overwhelming them with guilt. Medical professionals

in our systems. Foods such as white bread, white rice, potatoes, and pasta turn into sugars in our bloodstream, affecting insulin levels and creating body fat. We can find healthy carbs in wholegrain foods, vegetables, fruits, and a surprising array of other good foods.

The third S stands for seconds — those second helpings of food at the dinner table. When it comes to weight gain, caloric intake is not just a function of what we eat, but how much we eat. Having seconds is not necessarily a sin, but we must never forget that gluttony is. For many of us this is an issue drage claim we need a minimum of 30 minutes of physical exercise each day, preferably 60 minutes. That can seem out of reach for most of us. Fortunately, the benefits of physical activity throughout a day are cumulative, so it does not necessarily need to be 30 continuous minutes.

Walking is a good starting place. If we go from doing nothing to taking a brisk walk every day, the benefits health-wise can be quite remarkable. Walking is also a good multitasking exercise. We can both walk and fellowship with the Lord, or build a relationship with a friend, or think about a leadership decision. In fact, walking stimulates the flow of blood to the brain and helps us think more clearly.

Of course, there are many ways we can be physically active throughout the day. Playing with our kids, taking the stairs instead of an elevator, cleaning the garage — all of these exerting activities contribute to the cumulative benefits of physical exercise.

For those who are physically able, the ideal is at least 30 minutes of somewhat more vigorous exercise every day. The best regimen is a combination of cardiovascular workouts and resistance training. Cardiovascular exercise helps with circulation, heart health, energy level, and cholesterol reduction. Boosting muscle mass through resistance workouts increases our metabolism and causes our bodies to burn fat even when we are not working out. As we age, stretching exercises also become increasingly important for maintaining flexibility.

All of this takes time, unfortunately, and a little discipline. Start with small goals and build up to bigger ones. Exercise with someone for the accountability and enjoyment of it. Celebrate successes but do not fall into the trap of always using food as the reward. Try to do a little exercise regularly as opposed to a lot intermittently.

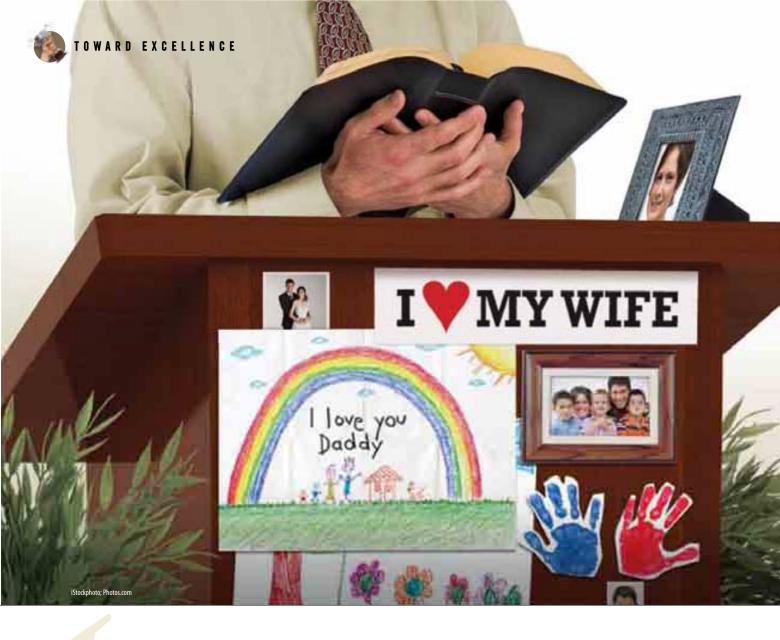
HONOR GOD

Above all, care for your body as unto the Lord. Often when I am exercising I tell myself I am doing this for the Lord's glory and for my family who need me, as well as a church that wants a healthy pastor. Someone once said, "If we can't do this for ourselves, let's at least do it for the sake of those who love us."

Better yet, let us rest, eat, and exercise for the glory of the One who created our bodies. Paul had it right, *"Honor God with your body."* May our response be, *"Yes, Lord"* and *"Help us, Lord"* and *"To Your glory we will do it, Lord."*



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I attended a daylong focus group with more than 20 pastors. For hours we discussed what the church needs to do to

strengthen families. At the end of the day I asked, "What is your greatest need when it comes to strengthening families in your church?"

Nearly in unison they said, "My marriage and family." Ministry was extracting an incredible toll on their homes. Pastor Ben Freudenburg revealed a portion of the problem when my cohost Bob Lepine and I interviewed him on our radio program *FamilyLife Today*. He said, "We have become ministers because we have this great passion to care for and love people to Christ. We will do whatever it takes. Sometimes we get misguided and put so much energy into the work of the church that we do not realize what we are doing to our lives

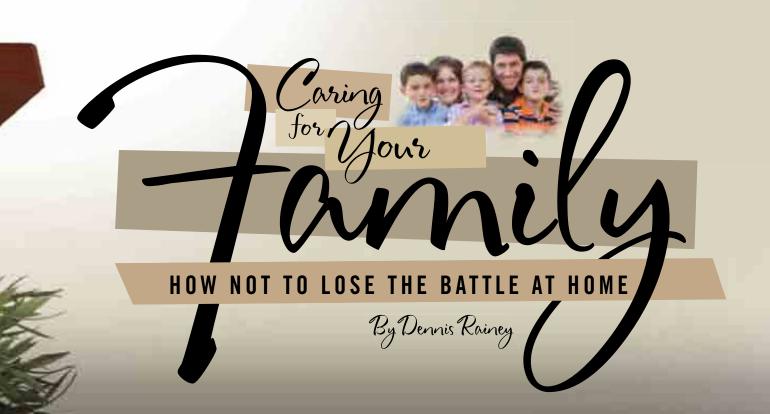


and to our families." The weight pastors carry is one of the more difficult assignments in life. The work schedule alone

ficult assignments in life. The work schedule alone can create tensions at home. Archibald Hart, senior professor of Psychology and Dean Emeritus, Fuller Department of Clinical Psychology, reported that 90 percent of pastors work more than 46 hours per week, and many work 60 hours. Another survey found that 80 percent of the clergy feel the church has negatively impacted their families, and 33 percent say the ministry is an outright hazard to their families.

Ultimately the state of a pastor's marriage and family is a matter of integrity. The psalmist Asaph wrote of David, "So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart" (Psalm 78:72, NASB).¹ Are those of us in ministry leading lives that others can emulate?

When Paul spoke of his ministry, he emphasized both sharing the gospel and the example of his own life (1 Thessalonians 2:1–12). He backed his communicating the gospel by his exemplary life. Probably nothing reveals more about a man's



character than how he relates to his wife and children.

I am challenged by Psalm 101. First, he said, "I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart" (101:2, NASB). He then commented on the kind of person who would influence him: "He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me" (101:6, NASB). This is what we all seek — to live clean, honest lives that will inspire and encourage others to do likewise.

MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR MINISTRY

Your relationship with your spouse and children is the most important message on the family your church will ever hear you preach. H.B. London, a pastor for 31 years who currently directs a ministry to pastors and their families at Focus on the Family, said the most strategic thing a senior pastor can do to encourage strong marriages and families in the church is to "model a strong marriage. Model attentiveness. Model intimacy. Model loving parenthood. That's the first thing. Remember that your marriage and your family are more important than your ministry."

You should not feel pressure to be a perfect example of a

Christian family. That is not what your church needs. Instead, people need to know how you apply the Christian life to the struggles in your marriage and family. Often God wants to use your failures to show others how to get back on track. Your most profound ministry can come from your weakness.

Your people need to see what a Christ-honoring, growing marriage looks like. Let them see that you and your wife are full of sacrificial love and forgiveness. Let them see that you seek to obey God, to be honest about failures and successes, and to glorify the Lord through a love-filled marriage and family.

Instead of seeing a wife and the children — and the duties of husband and father — as a burden or even as a hindrance to your ministry, view your wife and children as gifts from God. A strong, refreshing relationship with your spouse and fruitful relationships with your children will strengthen your public ministry.

You need the love, affection, and support that come uniquely from a marriage partner. Because of the demands of your ministry, you may need this even more. If your marriage is full of joy and encouragement, then you will be refreshed and

Caring for Your Family (continued from page 71)

energized and able to minister more effectively. But if your marriage has strain and contention, it will drain you emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

At times a need in the church will consume your time and energy. But if this is the rule rather than the exception, eventually the debts you owe to the home front will come due, and the price may be more than you can pay.

In every church some people do not understand this, and some might even try to make life miserable for the pastor who insists he must take time and energy to tend to the needs of his wife and children. Stand firm. Do not abandon the sheep at home in favor of the sheep at church.

MINISTER FIRST TO YOUR SPOUSE

I can think of no other profession where the demands of the job can enter the home with such ease, frequency, and intensity. If a pastor is successful in ministering to the needs of his

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people, then the demand for meeting more needs will increase. If husband and wife fail to understand and regulate this, their marriage may become a casualty.

London says, "The thing we hear most from pastors' wives is they just don't have enough time together [with their husbands], and many times the church has become a mistress to the pastor."

Although the husband is primarily responsible for not letting church-related activities make his wife jealous, it is also important the wife work with her husband to help prevent him from developing an overloaded schedule. Pastors should give their wives freedom to say, "Honey, I love you enough not to let you keep doing all of this. You are making it too hard on yourself and your family."

Here are ideas on how pastors can keep their marriages healthy.

Make time for romance. Save some of your creativity,



"Do not take yourselves too seriously."

"Make dating a priority — see if you can have a date without discussing the church. Tell your husband if he's home by (a reasonable hour), you will make it worth his while."

"Take care of themselves as a couple first and foremost. They should remind themselves that as they counsel others, particularly the unmarried, they must focus on their oneness in Christ."

"Talk. Be sure that all of your activities are not church-related (have a life outside the church). Laugh about things instead of getting defensive."

"Be who you are and not what others expect you to be."

"Pray about developing healthy boundaries for the two of you — what God would have you do to protect yourselves from being eaten up by others. You want so much to help everyone, but without healthy boundaries the two of you will suffer."

"For the man, find an older man to keep you accountable for the hours and energy you spend at the cost of your family. For the woman, purpose to make your husband as successful as you can. Free him up, in terms of time, energy, or whatever, to do what God has called him to do."

"Have a family day once a week. Read and learn together."

"Each week set aside time, if possible, for at least three or four hours to spend together discussing what is important, what is going on that week, and concerns, as well as doing something fun weekly. Pray together daily."

- DENNIS RAINEY, M.A.



emotional energy, and time to add nice touches to your relationship. Leave notes or little gifts for each other ... go out on date nights ... send e-mails or text messages saying how much you look forward to seeing your spouse that evening.

While we were raising our six children, Barbara and I went on three-night getaways, two or three times per year. It helped recharge our marriage and fuel our passion for our ministry.

Share everything. Make your ministry a true partnership. Your wife does not need to know the details about every couple you have counseled or every budget meeting. But she needs to know your heart, your dreams, your struggles. Also, share openly any temptations — and urge your wife to warn you of potential problems of which you may not be aware.

Lorna Dobson wrote, "Having talked to pastors' wives who have lived through having other women vie for their husbands' attention, we have agreed that we should not cast aside our uneasy feelings, but gently urge our husbands to observe and deal with the problem. One older ministry wife told me that red flags seen by the wife should be considered a gift of intuition and should be taken seriously by the couple."

Embrace suffering together. Without the proper perspective, suffering can lead to discouragement and anger and hinder you accomplishing your task. A pastor and his wife must "bear one another's burdens."

Pray together daily. If you are looking for a practical way to lead your wife spiritually, there is nothing with greater benefits than this discipline.

RAISE CHILDREN, NOT PREACHER'S KIDS

Perhaps the key is to view our children as our privileged responsibility and assignment from God. This is the quality one young man, himself now a pastor, saw in his relationship with his father, who was a pastor: "My dad could teach spiritual principles from the most ordinary circumstances. When Dad walked out the door, I was invited. When he played golf with his preacher friends, I rode in the golf cart. ... The beauty of Dad's method of bringing me into his world was that he did not have to alter his schedule, just his focus. There was never 'family time' on his calendar. If he was doing something where I could be with him, I was. ... The other day my dad commented, 'I regret not being more consistent in my family devotions when you were growing up.' I reminded him that our family altar was often a boat, a field, or a golf cart."

Another child of a pastor has painful memories. At her father's funeral she watched and listened as mourner after mourner described all the wonderful deeds done by this shepherd for his sheep. When at last the crowd departed, she asked, "Who was that man of whom they spoke?"

All the deceased pastor's children agreed that others had known the heart of their father better than they did. In sadness the daughter of this wonderful servant of God wrote of her Do not abandon the sheep at home

the sheep

in favor of

father, "To Dad every request from a [church] member constituted a command performance. Family plans were canceled without question. Protests were pointless. Even the youngest child could recite Dad's response: 'Don't you understand? God called me to serve these people. My work is to do the Lord's work. How can I refuse? They need me.' And he would be gone."

Here are some ideas on how pastors and other church leaders can minister to their children.

Cultivate a focused relationship with each child. Because you must share so much of your time with nonfamily members, it is important that your children know you will devote special time and attention to each one.

at church.

Explain to your kids what you do and why. Your children need to know how important your ministry is. Also, they

need to observe you (in addition to Sunday) engaged in that ministry. Share your passion, enthusiasm, and sense of urgency with family. They have a desire and a right to be proud of what you do.

Save some pastoral care for your own sheep. Your children need their pastor, too. For about a decade I declined opportunities to lead Bible studies for businessmen because I did not want to always be rushing off to help others know God while failing to introduce my own children to Him.

One of my fondest memories is that of meeting before school with two of my teenagers for a donut and a study in Proverbs. After your wife, your children are your most important disciples.

REDEEMING THE TIME

I have been in ministry since 1970, and I know what it means to be stretched and challenged. But I cannot fully appreciate or understand the 24/7 tension that surrounds a pastor's schedule. The word *boundaries* hardly seems adequate to describe how a busy pastor must shape, guard, and patrol his schedule — if he is to remain effective at home.

Freudenburg knows all about the schedule scenario. He became so ministry driven that his wife, Jennifer, confronted him. He went to see a friend to seek advice. Here's how Freudenburg reported that conversation:

"He knew I was not spending time caring about Jennifer as I should have been. So he asked me to open my calendar. 'Ben,' he said, 'what is the most important thing to you in your life?'

"Of course, Jennifer and my two girls."

" 'Well, let me see your calendar.'



"I opened my calendar and he looked at it and said, 'If those are the two most important things in your life, how come I do not see them anywhere scheduled in?' "

Ouch! Many of us would have felt similar embarrassment. Usually it is not bad motives — most of us want to spend time with our spouse and children. We simply have difficulty coming up with that little word, *no*.

I appreciate what Pastor Daniel Langford wrote about how he says no.

"First, I use my calendar as a way of saying no: 'I'm sorry, but that date conflicts with another appointment.'

"Second, I appeal to higher authority: 'There are legal restrictions on that type of counseling,' or 'I must consult with my wife.'

"Third, I decline by using personal boundaries as a reason for saying no rather than a personal rejection of the requester: 'Thank you for that offer, but I need time for rest.' Or, "That was kind of you to ask, but what you want me to do does not fit my personal goals at this time.'

"Fourth, have someone else say no for you. Generally my wife acts as this kind of buffer; while in a larger church a secretary can assist in guarding the minister's time and priorities.

"Fifth, despite the controversy generated by this technique, I sometimes use an answering machine to screen phone calls."

When emergencies arise, you need to respond. Some things you will not be able to predict and decide on how to handle ahead of time. That's okay. God will provide the guidance required in those situations. Your wife and family need to understand that your calling and work involve responding to



people's emergencies, often at inopportune moments.

But you must have strong enough boundaries to know what is and is not an emergency. If you have not established your criteria and limits before the telephone call comes, you will almost inevitably say yes and head out the door.

It dawned on me one day that I was getting calls all hours of the day and night from people who had just spent the last 20 years of their lives disobeying God. What they wanted me to do was be available to fix their longstanding problem by talking on the phone or meeting with them right away. I had to realize that if Barbara and I did not establish boundaries, I was living according to the plans of other people.

Take a day off each week — without guilt. Having one day a week for rest and refreshment is God's idea. Most of the time ministry can wait 24 hours. H.B. London says, "I'm not sure a pastor of any kind of growing church can experience normalcy, especially if he doesn't take his days off. We live in a world where the light is always on. We fight the tyranny of the unfinished."

GUARD YOUR HEART

Modeling a healthy, God-honoring marriage and family can be one of the most significant contributions you make to your church, to say nothing of the pleasing results in your own home.

Too many pastors are losing the battle at home. Is there anything you need to repent of in your life and family? Selfishness? Arrogance? Disrespect for your spouse? Ignoring your children? Anger at a child who is difficult to love? Failure to pray with your wife? Not reading Scripture to your children?

A surprisingly high number of pastors struggle with pornography. Are you hooked? Repent and get help. Claim cleansing and forgiveness.

As you walk in integrity in your own home and honor God through your marriage and your relationships with your children, your home will be a visual sermon the sheep in your flock will welcome and never forget. @



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HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH THOSE CHARACTERISTICS AND FLAWS THAT SATAN CAN AND WILL USE TO KEEP US IN BONDAGE AND EVEN DESPAIR? HERE ARE EIGHT STEPS TO HEALING AND DELIVERANCE.

For me to address a subject that relates to the health of someone in ministry is difficult because it is necessary to be honest about my life and the missteps I have taken. When I think about why some of our colleagues behave the way they do, it is also necessary to point a finger back at myself and ask, "Why did I behave the

way I did?"

First, we must look at our childhood. I am not a psychologist, but I am a keen observer of those who lead the church. Many pastors enter the ministry as a result of some dysfunction in their formative years.

PERSONAL DYSFUNCTION

I did not go into ministry because of my dad's failure, but the fact I came from a pastor legacy and was the fourth generation in my family to enter full-time service could have influenced me. But my dad's misadventure did have a lot to do with my reaction to those in authority. When Dad failed us as a family, I decided I would never give anyone else the chance to hurt me that badly again. But the truth is, I did. I kept giving him the chance to hurt me over and over.

The residual of our relationship was that I rebelled at authority and did not trust many people. When one gets into that spiral, it is difficult to change one's thinking — or at least it was for me.

I still battle the temptation not to trust people, and at other times to minimize their motives. I think I can spot a phony a mile away; but, because of that, I find myself looking for phonies rather than giving people the benefit of the doubt.

I also have a difficult time with clergypersons who see themselves as prima donnas or better than others. I think of the one who Jesus said came to the altar and prayed, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men" (Luke 18:11). Jesus' response was, "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled" (verse 14).

I think of the hypocrites Jesus encountered. They were guilty of doing what they did for attention rather than to glorify God. They prayed loud and long, gave offerings so people could see their generosity, and basically made a spectacle of themselves. Remember the words of Jesus as He condemned their behaviors, "They have received their reward in full" (Matthew 6:2). Jesus admonished, "Do not be like them" (verse 8).

Many times in my ministry I have been cynical and judgmental. At times I could not help myself. And besides, many times I was



right in my assumption even though I was wrong in my behavior. You see, my dad was my hero until he let me down; and, when he did, I decided not to have any more heroes. If you do not have heroes, you do not have role models. If you do not have role models, you are left to your own understanding of what is proper behavior and what is not.

Who is your hero? Why is he or she your hero and how has this person impacted your life? Or, whose hero are you, and how are you impacting that person's life?

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Another reality we must deal with is the expectation level we face every day. The bigger-and-better syndrome pervasive in the church world creates a type of dishonesty all of us must avoid. Somewhere someone gives us the idea that our responsibility as a clergyperson is to build the church, to succeed, to even overperform, and to be the best.

Most of us will never live up to the expectations of many. We will labor along in the world of the *if onlys* until we come to a place that says, "What's the use?" That is a sad commentary on the ministry as a whole. God wants us to be the best we can be, but even the best we can be will not be as good as someone else's best.

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Even though God knows that and accepts our best, we inwardly become dissatisfied with who we are and wish at times we were someone or somewhere else. We delve into the shallow world of competition with colleagues. Rather than look God in the eye and say, "Okay, You know me, You created me, You are aware of my gifts — what can we do together to bring blessing to Your church?" at times we resent the God who created us, and others who might have an advantage because of their uniqueness or giftedness.

If you are going to live and die in the world of others' success or failure, you will always be dissatisfied with who you are and what you have accomplished. As a result, you will not be easy to be around, ever blaming others for your unhappiness, and moving from one unsatisfying experience to another. That will take an emotional toll on your family, and your ministry will always be on the defensive rather than the offensive. You will look at what you did not achieve rather than what you did.

I believe in the turf concept. Here is what I mean. Because God knows us so well, He has a plan for our lives and ministry that is realistic. He knows what we can do, and He attempts to give us every opportunity to succeed, so He gives us turf.

What is turf? It is that small or large piece of His world in which He wants us to invest. For some of you that turf is huge — thousands of people, millions of dollars, great responsibilities, and competent support. For others it is a much simpler assignment, but just as significant. Perhaps it is a few people, humble surroundings, and a lot less visibility, but no less important in God's equation. He has given you responsibility for your turf. The two of you become partners. As Neil Wiseman and I say in our book, *The Heart of a Great Pastor*, "Bloom where you are planted."

Do not waste your time making comparisons with another person's turf or belittle how God has assigned you. Bloom to His glory. Thank God for your turf. Seek His guidance, and humbly go about the challenge of building the body of Christ.

DYSFUNCTIONAL CHURCHES

There is another foundation for our negative attitude that most of us can identify with, and others have been victimized by dysfunction in the local church. I wrote a piece in my weekly column called *The Shepherd's Covenant Encourager* entitled "Addressing the Church's Dysfunction."

"I spent time recently with a pastor of a dysfunctional church. The chances that he will survive there are slim. It was my privilege to stand alongside this pastor in helping lead his congregation back to unity and into a deeper walk with the Lord. Only time will tell if our mission was successful.

"I had another pastor say, 'If I was not the pastor of this church, I know for sure I wouldn't attend it.' The truth is, a lot of clergypersons would echo that pastor's sentiments. Question: What are we going to do to turn that trend around?

"Some say it will take a revival. Can you define revival? For me, revival is the body of Christ in renewed obedience to the will of God. Others say we need to change the church's polity (government). In other words, let the pastor's fate be in the hands of fewer people rather than a whole congregation. Still, there are some who say the problem in the church today is that we have a tendency to mirror society rather than society mirroring the church. I do know that our consumer-driven society does carry over to the church.

"I hear from my colleagues who say that, in a small-to medium-size church, you will always be dealing with the power structure — and, most of the time, that base is resistant to change. And most of the churches in America are small to medium in size.

"So what is the answer? I am no expert on this, but after reading Paul's first and second letters to the Thessalonians, I am convinced the body of Christ must respect its clergy, live in peace with one another, feed the flock of God, avoid evil, be joyous, and

Character Really matters

In today's permissive moral environment, it sometimes seems easy to accept the prevailing opinion that character doesn't matter all that much. But I have seen men's lives destroyed when they give in to such thinking and allow themselves to walk down the path of sexual immorality or other grievous sins.

Problems of credibility arise not only from actual events but also from questionable appearance in behavior and relationships. Careless conduct bites like a mad dog even when there is not actual sin.

In our writings and along the pastoral conference trail, Neil and I have offered tried-and-true advice for building a high hedge around your marriage. Here's a short list of what we believe to be satisfying ways to create a happy clergy marriage and to build a hedge that protects the minister of God from many temptations to sexual sin:

- Live by the highest possible code of conduct.
- Find a prayer partner.
- Keep the home fires burning.
- Learn from others' failures.
- Maintain your resistance.
- Remember real pastors control their appetites.
- Maintain balance in your life.
- Establish accountability.
- Nurture soul friends.
- Seek marriage counseling quickly when you sense a problem.

Now let me list specific ways to help you pass the moral credibility test with flying colors:

Apply Paul's teachings

Steep yourself in the perspective that Paul outlines in Ephesians 5:1–21. Paul gives wonderful recommendations shaped by the reasoned way he lived his own life and did his ministry.

Strengthen your marriage

Right now, stop reading and make a list of practical ways to improve your marriage. Mail a card, send flowers, buy a negligee, arrange a short trip out of town, offer to help with more household tasks, take your spouse out to dinner or plan a family outing that is not interrupted by any church obligation. Most ministry couples will do their marriage a fulfilling favor by giving more attention to issues of communication, affection, intimacy, and sexual fulfillment. With a little extra enjoyable effort, you can be so much more for each other than anybody outside your marriage could ever be.

Speak often of your admiration for your spouse

Church members will appreciate this part of the hedge you are building. They will admire this quality and perhaps even emulate Joseph flees Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:1-20)

it in their marriage. And you can be sure they will tell your spouse what you say; such true rumors might make you a hero at home.

Refuse to tell risqué stories

Secular workplaces are often filled with suggestive stories and so-called cute jokes. Many people enjoy sharing those tidbits with their pastor. Though you probably won't wish to overreact when someone tells you a questionable story, refuse to pass it on. Establish and maintain a high standard for yourself.

Speak up with prophetic outrage against sexual sins

Society has tried to soften adultery by calling it an affair or living together. But sexual sin is heinous and devastating, however benignly it is described. The sting is just as painful in family and in church as it has always been. It's time for each pastor in the land to shout from the pulpit, "By God's grace and power, put a stop to such sin."

Excerpted from H.B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman They Call Me Pastor, Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2000), 117, 120–122. Used with permission of authors.

be careful not to put out the Spirit's fire (quench His workings)."1

Later I received a response to my column from one pastor who said, "I have been a pastor here for over 6 years. Our church is a small (dysfunctional) body. Your words in the *Encourager* hit me today. I have seen God move in this church through prayer and felt Him strengthen me through the Holy Spirit. Last month we had a huge victory in that the church replaced two divisive members of the board. I have been attacked on many counts by these board members for things as small as the grammar in my sermons to my tithe to the church. I could run off 10 more attacks." No one said ministry will be fair, but our attitude will be key to survival. Some of you reading my words are serving in a dysfunctional church. You do not feel respected, your congregation or board does not give you opportunity to lead, and you sense your weekly sermons fall on deaf ears. In other words, you do not see much progress.

What does this do to you? For starters, most of us have been there. You begin to doubt yourself. You begin to blame others for your situation. You lose sight of God's vision for your ministry, and you draw up in a defensive posture that not only excludes your family, but resists God's overtures of assistance. You can become immobilized and depressive, and you place your good mental and moral health in jeopardy.

I work with a lot of pastors who allow things that happen in their dysfunctional church to dictate their behavior and attitude. All of us are products of our surroundings, but that is the devil's strategy — to catch us with our heads down, thinking we fail because we cannot control certain outcomes. We judge ourselves as a result of sin in the house. But that is God's responsibility. Our condemnation of the carnal minded will simply add to our discomfort. Let God be the judge. Hold your head up. Be humble. Do the best job you can do and like someone said, "Do not let them see you sweat — but rather let them see you in earnest prayer."

PERSONAL SIN

One other area we must address is the issue of sin. We do not like that phrase associated with those who wear the cloth, but it is reality. At Focus on the Family when we respond to the calls of troubled clergy, there is nearly always an area of anger or resentment that comes to the surface. We seem to forget the very straightforward Scriptures that identify dangerous attitudes that can hinder our effectiveness and lead to sin. Hear the apostle Paul, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another" (Colossians 3:12,13). Quite a contrast to what we see attributed to the sinful nature described in Galatians — hatred, discord, jealousy, and selfish ambition (Galatians 5:20). We must not allow those things to define our personality and ultimately our ministry.

So realistically, how should we deal with those characteristics and flaws that Satan can and will use to keep us in bondage and even despair? Things like (my definitions):

Judgmental	An opinion or estimation of another person.
Cynicism	A tendency to be suspicious of motives and virtues of others.
Fear	An emotional reaction to the unknown; a reluctance to trust.
Control	A need for power over others and circumstances to dominate.
Jealousy	Envious of another's success, position, possessions.

And the list can go on and on.

Let me remind you.

First: We must be willing to own our issues. We need to stop blaming the church, our leaders, the board, or even our family. It is what it is. Like one church member said to me when I was complaining, "Just suck it up. You knew it would not be easy."

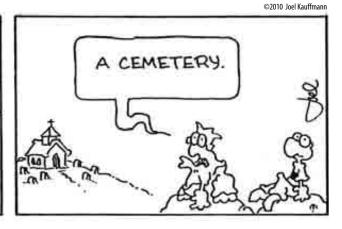
Second: We must examine our lives. Even pray the prayer of the Psalmist in Psalm 139:23,24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." If there is a reason to repent, then repent. He will reveal your infirmity. Listen to God.

Third: We need to invite one or two other clergy into our lives and openly discuss our feelings, fears, and insecurities. A person who is wrapped up in his own pain cannot see clearly how to get out of the situation. We all need help.

Fourth: Be willing to apologize. Just as anyone caught in a situation where he had been unfair or highly critical, an apology is in order. A heartfelt expression that you are sorry you have had your negative thoughts and hurtful expressions will prove cleansing for you. There may also need to be an apology

R Pontius' Puddle





to your family and colleagues for becomeing so distant and hurtful. No more negativism.

Fifth: Pick yourself up. Dust yourself off. Do not live in the past. Whatever you do, stop beating yourself up. You are a creation fearfully and wonderfully made. God anointed you. He appointed you. He assigned you. And He enables you to accomplish the task before you. Do not live your life looking through the rearview mirror.

Sixth: Start encouraging your colleagues. Look for the best in others; and, when they succeed or reach a plateau of excellence, celebrate with them. God wants us to work as a team to His glory. Have a list of clergy you stay in contact with. Check in with them frequently and be like Barnabas — "an encourager" (Acts 4:36).

Seventh: Let God be God. He knows your situation. He is aware of your past and even your frailties. He is not intimidated by your challenges, and He eagerly desires to work with you through the inevitable realities. As the apostle Peter quotes from Proverbs 3:34: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). Peter then writes, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you" (verses 6,7).

Eighth: Now that you have considered the steps to healing and deliverance, help someone else. Use your story as an example of how even one of God's anointed can struggle with conflicting emotions and reactions, and then share your journey to victory.

In my book, *Pause, Recharge, Refresh*, I wrote a devotional entitled, "Walk Humbly With the Lord." I end my time with you with the following.

"There are parallels between baseball great Barry Bonds and the many pastors I have dealt with who have tainted their reputations and minimized their ministries.

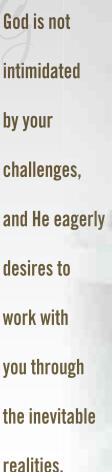
"The first is that Barry Bonds was a great ballplayer before suspicion of his use of steroids arose. Most pastors I meet are gifted — without taking shortcuts or playing too close to the line.

"The second parallel is a spirit of pride. Bonds is arrogant. I have never understood why some clergy I meet are prideful. Why would you be? Yet, I see it all the time. 'Look what I have done. Look how big we are. Stop and serve me,' their persona seems to say. Why? Is it not God who gives us our talent and places us in the area of ministry that will bring Him the greatest glory?

"The parallel is a tendency to forget those who have helped us achieve and have stood by us. If you are like me, there are very few days that pass without your thinking about the many influencers in your life.

"My point: Walk humbly with the Lord.

" 'So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!' (1 Corinthians 10:12).





" 'When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom' (Proverbs 11:2)."²

We can live healthy, productive, positive, and effective ministry lives, but we must be vigilant because there are always challenges we must meet and address in the power of the One who called us. Stay healthy, my colleague. @



H.B. LONDON JR. vice president, Church & Clergy, Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, Colorado

NOTES

- The Shepherd's Covenant Encourager from Focus on the Family; March 8, 2010; http:// www.parsonage.org/images/sce/issues/SCE-100308.html. Accessed 23 March 2010.
- H.B. London, Jr., Pause, Recharge, Refresh (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.), 87.



What a Feader Must Do to Get to the Next Level and Take Others With Him

By Scott Hagan

When Jesus spoke the words in Matthew 18:20, He intended them as the faith promise of His assured presence:

"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst" (NASB).¹ Unfortunately, those anointed

words have become, more often than not, the sad disclaimer for the pastor who finds himself standing before a lousy turnout.

On occasions I, too, have found myself holding that inner debate, wondering whether or not Jesus is concerned about the size of my ministry. I realize there is a book in the Bible called Numbers — but is that Jesus' ultimate measuring stick?

And for that matter, does Jesus even carry a stick? I have concluded that Christ's concern for my ministry has more to do with the principles of *increase* than it does bean counting. That epiphany is huge for the leader who longs to get to the next level. Jesus aims at the inner life first; the public life, second. Clearly, that was Jesus' ministry-development model. He chose to defeat Satan privately before defeating him publicly. What does this mean?

This means that Jesus is after my maturity, even after He has released me into His assignment. Enough maturity must be present in my life to bring credibility. But there are still significant growth factors along the way that happen in a leader's life.

Moses was an along-the-way type of leader. Exodus 4:24: "At a lodging place on the way, the Lord

met Moses and was about to kill him." Why was the Lord so upset at Moses? What gaps in Moses were of such significance that the entire exodus campaign was in jeopardy under his leadership? Moses was about to find out that many details of the mission — as well as several levels of necessary maturity — were of greater importance to God than just seeing His people freed from Egypt.

THE BIG THING IS THE LITTLE THING



Moses was about to discover that leadership would be harder than he realized. Pharaoh's hard heart would delay the story just long enough for Moses to close more and more of those dangerous gaps in his leadership life. Visionary leaders hate delay. But it is in seasons of delay where growth happens best. Any effective and seasoned leader will tell you that the word *no* taught him more wisdom in life than the word *yes.* Moses was also about to learn that in God's leadership economy the big thing is really the little thing.

The Lord was seeking to kill Moses because he had failed to circumcise his son according to Jewish law. This looked like a small thing to Moses, maybe just an oversight. As a matter of fact, Moses was most likely going to circumcise his son after the customs of Egypt rather than the promise of Abraham. In other words, how could a deliverer lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage when he still had traces of Egyptian bondage inside his heart?

Chair No. 3: What a Leader Must Do to Get to the Next Level and Take Others With Him (continued from page 83)

For Moses, the little undone thing became the big thing. The Exodus was off as far as Moses being the leader because he had a gap left unattended.

Today, Jesus aims toward the increased maturity of our character, even while allowing us to serve in renowned capacities. If I succeed in allowing Him full control, this allows me the foundation to reinvest that same maturation process in others, but this time with real meaning. But living in that place and pace of increase — first in maturity, then in fruitfulness — is not a simple assignment. For those on the outside looking in, the weighty mantle of spiritual leadership can be difficult to fathom. The call to public ministry life, which is a call to both example and excellence, is a dance between flaw and perfection. It sometimes turns an honest man into a liar.

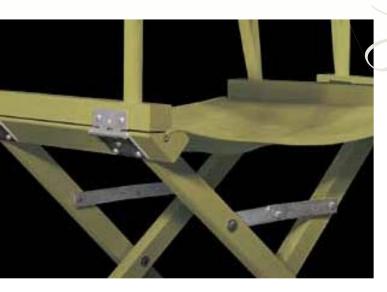
Along with these challenges about personal increase, I want to pass along a handful of qualities I have sought to prophetically experience as well as impart and claim for my church. During my travels I have visited some amazing churches; many others, however, were on life support. I have begun to categorize several key traits that seem to rest in some measurable way on these thriving church communities. These churches some large, some medium, some small in number — are setting the course of destiny and spiritual conversation for their about to kill me as He did Moses — then I cannot expect anyone to make the journey with me.

HUNGRY FOR THE NEXT LEVEL

The first trait that must stay alive in me, and in turn alive in the people I lead, is a lifestyle of worship that transcends the taste buds. In breakthrough churches, both the 17-year-old and the 70-year-old are side-by-side in the mutual exaltation of Christ. I cannot explain on paper how these churches pull this off, but it is being done all over the nation. When it comes to worship, the decisive element is the Ancient of Days, not the age of the worshipers. The worship tensions facing many churches stem far more from personality and preference issues than doctrinal ones.

It strongly appears that the deciding factor in taking a church to the next level is whether or not a passionately worshiping pastor leads that church. In many churches, I have witnessed the pastor's disinterest during worship. He fumbles through his notes. He looks uneasy with his surroundings and stressed about the larger concerns of running the church. This could mean budgets or it could mean stress over staff. Either way, he is not in the moment of personal worship.

If a pastor does not think his congregation can see this,



communities. These traits are neither scientific nor exhaustive. But perhaps they will spark a fire of organizational renewal.

Each trait is connected to something that God is doing in me not just through me. If I fail to experience this next level, then I lose my capacity to take others with me. My ministry may appear to be working in the short term; but, if there is a deep inward push back in my passion to grow along the way as a leader — especially during moments when it feels like God is

Living in the place and pace of increase — first in maturity, then in fruitfulness — is not a simple assignment. he is greatly misguided. They pick up on the subtle cues and nuances of his leadership, or should I say lack of leadership, when it comes to worship. Yes, he may do well as the style and sound police; but, when it comes to personal worship, it just does not appear to be his priority. There will never be a next level for that leader without a fresh worship life flowing though him.

Defining what is, and what is not, the correct passion for worship is a dangerous and near impossible endeavor for anyone. Simon the Pharisee attempted to define for Jesus the limits of genuine adora-

tion, and he received a face-to-face rebuke from Christ.

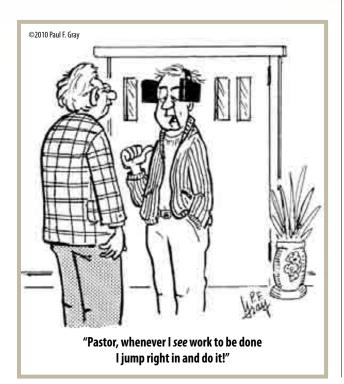
A second trait I see in a next-level leader and a next-level church is a clear radiance on the shepherd. On the heels of a gargantuan meltdown, God reentered and reengineered a nation through a man who was unaware of his countenance. While Aaron's resolve melted like molten metal, Moses met with God. With Aaron as the new picture of backslidden leadership, God gave the people a sharp contrast in Moses as he descended the mountain with the restored Ten Commandments chiseled out by his hand. Something mystical happened to Moses as he chiseled out the stone tablets: God rested on him in a way that was undeniable, even from a distance.

Next-level leaders seem to have encounters with God's Word that change their complexion. Men with radiance lead cityshaping churches. People follow radiance more than talent. Believers are willing to follow leadership not limited by charisma, but who instead are clothed in Holy Spirit radiance.

Radiance is the tangible residue of God's love that lies deep within the leader's look. Radiance is that sound of wisdom and authority that continues to echo well beyond the words he speaks. Radiance paints itself on the face of a man whose integrity and intimacy are genuine.

A third trait of the next-level leader is that the main thing of his life is evangelism, not church maintenance. Churches need a healthy balance of touch-and-tell ministry. Sitting year after year in lecture-style Scripture study was never a method of Jesus or Paul. Bible study is nothing more than bubble study when it only involves a cognizant challenge. People grow best by going, not just knowing. A pastor must never leave the basics of his own first years of the faith journey. He cannot create any level of contagious faith in his church unless he tells stories on himself about reaching the lost.

Information alone will never break nor stir the heart. Every pastor and church must constantly experience the sights and smells of the street. Jesus wandered frequently among the tombs



Next-level leaders seem to have encounters with God's Word that change their complexion.

LOOK FOR THE GREEN GRASS

Jesus calmly told His agitated disciples to sit the masses in groups on green grass. Like Jethro, who wisely advised Moses to divide the people in groups of tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands, Jesus understood the value of purpose and order even in the midst of the miraculous. Group life that fosters genuine, loving relationships and systematic discipleship gatherings that cultivate maturity and spawn new leaders are the core essentials associated with New Testament life. Acts 2 was both the Upper Room (verses 1–4) and the Family Room (verses 42–47). In other words, the New Testament church had both an outpouring and an outline for ministry multiplication.

Next-level leaders participate and perpetuate the concepts of care and discipleship. They build resilient friendships in the Body and totally engage in systematic discipleship. These are key trends of their growth and sustainability. Business and bureaucracy are poisonous leavens. The leader must notice these poisons and extract them before they infect people. The best strategies are the simplest strategies. Many leaders confuse the busyness of their people as signs of growth and maturity. Beware.

The final trait of next-level leaders and the churches they lead is breakthrough generosity. This past year I declared war against the mind-set of financial mediocrity. We are coming through a devastating downturn in our economy that profoundly affected church receiving, but not giving. This has in many ways been a good thing for the American church as it

and leper colonies. This is how He spent His time, and I am sure this stirred the incarnate side of Christ, something a classroom could never do.

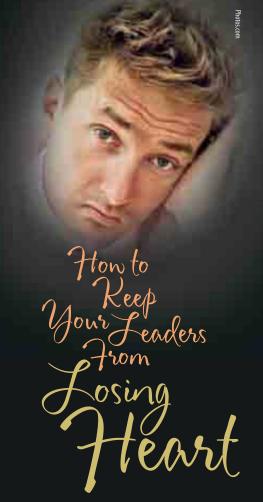
I have given our church the Matthew 25 challenge: To reconnect with Christ's lifestyle manifesto — the poor, naked, lonely, hungry, and the prisoner. We begin by asking the Holy Spirit to creatively show and lead us to the most forgotten of our city — to embrace our Samaria.

A fourth trait of next-level leaders who, by design, not default, find themselves leading next-level churches, is the presence of a working strategy of care and discipleship. For every *purposedriven* church in America there are hundreds of *chance-driven* churches. The spontaneity of the sanctuary is a beautiful thing, but there must be strategic thinkers and workers behind that Sunday morning curtain.

Chair No.3: What a Feader Must Do to Get to the Next Fevel and Take Others With Him (continued from page 85)

rediscovers simplicity. But a negative effect is the growing idea that because giving is down, the ability *to give* as a ministry is fading. Nothing could be further from the truth. Breakthrough churches and next-level leaders are giving like never before. We must expose the mass-giving lie being spread across America. The lie says that only a small percentage of people will ever be able to tithe and give. Yet God has called us to reach the whole world, a task almost impossible unless the whole church becomes revived enough to bring the whole tithe into the house of the Lord.

I once heard it said that it takes two things to build a church: cash and the anointing. You cannot succeed by one without the other. As crass as that may sound, it rings with a sense of reality. As much as it grates some to believe this, giving, not receiving, is imperative to the next level in our lives as leaders. More than trends, these traits are not perfected in effective



"Let us not lose heart in doing good" (Galatians 6:9, NASB). For a leader, losing heart is a painful way to die. The slow bleed of passion and the desire to serve constitutes this idea of losing heart. Without intervention, this is a sure-fire way to bring that leader to the point of no return. Finding leaders with heart is like finding gold. They possess the skills, character, and willingness to serve. In fact, they are so effective a pastor tends to take his eyes off of them and focus on more needy leaders. Because the loss of heart can be a slow process, often a pastor does not notice that it is even happening to one of his key leaders.

Three Reasons Why a Leader Loses Heart

There is no place to debrief failure. Not every idea works. Not every vision mes to pass. Truth be told, the church is a place of experimentation. Sometimes people are involved in a bad idea and the time comes to cut their loses. Those who volunteer in the church often pour themselves into an idea; then, when it goes awry, they are left to interpret everything on their own. Pastors tend to move on quickly from bad ideas, but often leave their leaders in the dark as to what actually happened. Without a place to debrief and offer ideas for improvement, a leader starts to lose heart. Volunteer leaders do not expect perfection, but they do desire to be kept in the loop and be asked for feedback.

There are long periods of isolation. Everyone needs to be around positive, optimistic, and exciting people. We all feed off the faith and enthusiasm of others. People do not serve because the assignment is so compelling. People serve because it brings them into contact with other like-minded leaders. Leaving your leaders isolated from other life-giving people is a huge mistake. It is also a huge mistake for a pastor to think the vision is enough to keep people happy and motivated. A smart question to ask leaders is, "Do you enjoy serving with the other people in this area?" If they are slow to respond, the loss of heart is inevitable. A wise pastor keeps his leaders part of an exciting leadership community. He creates those places where they can constantly rub against the shoulders and hearts of other leaders who are just like them.

There is the total absence of encouragement.

learing that you are loved. Hearing that you are valued. Hearing that you are doing a great job and touching lives means the world to any leader. Encouragement is a direct pipeline to the heart. If a pastor wants to see his leaders living with an enlarged heart, he must find a way to bless them continually with words of encouragement. Whether it is a written note, a personal text, a public recognition, a personal dinner, a pastor must have a consistent way of speaking life and encouragement to all of his leaders, not just the ones in prominent roles or with a long history of personal friendship. A leader must never be left guessing, wondering how his pastor feels about him. The demands of leadership at any level are great. No one, not even the most successful pastor, can thrive for any period of time without someone along the way speaking life over him.

— SCOTT HAGAN

leaders, but they are present in the next-level leader.

THE THREE CHAIRS

I leave you with a simple metaphor about the three empty chairs in every church. The only variance from church to church is the number of them that are present. This illustration helps us see the need to focus as leaders on the things that will strengthen the Lord's church. You judge if it rings true.

Chair No. 1 represents the individual who on any given Sunday lifts his hand or walks the aisle at the conclusion of the message. He walks to that special spot where the auditorium becomes an altar.

Why the walk? Because something about God's grace just became both amazing and necessary. The tug ... the need ... the stepping out.

Most likely he filled out a card and in some situations received a computer-generated letter inviting him to a class on two. But in most cases, the process ends there. Saved? Only God knows. Relationship? Follow up? Not on your life.

And that, my friends, is empty chair No. 1.

The second empty chair represents that select few who go from salvation to connection and belonging. Then somewhere as a new follower of Christ, he senses the need for something far more than salvation and connection; it's a desire for power. He becomes aware of God's promise to fill him with the Holy Spirit and His missional purposes. Often at that same salvation altar he finds himself overtaken by the power of God during a revival service. A new kind of Baptism happens. Pentecost is no longer a Jewish feast. A fresh new prophetic world opens up. But with that new world comes a new wave of assault from Satan who fears this man's newfound capacity as a Spiritempowered disciple. Total spiritual warfare unleashes. Nothing like this happened after salvation; but now after getting baptized in the Holy Spirit, a deluge of trials, difficulties, and sufferings roar through his life. With no one to counsel him or disciple him in the dynamics of Spirit-filled living, he disappears from sight for no apparent reason. The breakthrough everyone was so hoping for in his life did happen, but shortly thereafter he is gone. There are hundreds of thousands of people like the man in chair No. 2 who have been touched by revival only to disappear shortly thereafter from the church.

They are empty chair No. 2.

The third empty chair, and the passion of this article, represents that individual who fills chair No. 1. He is saved and becomes grounded in relationship with Christ and His church. He then experiences a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit and finds a solid community of fellow Spirit-filled believers to work out the questions and experiences of the Spirit. Saved and filled with the Spirit, he senses another chair is calling him. It is the chair of service and leadership.

He feels compassion in his heart for something unmet in his

church and community. He loves his Lord, his pastor, and his church. He feels a desire to test the uncertain waters of leadership in the church. Maybe it is a small group; maybe it is organizing and mobilizing teams that engage the homeless. He goes through training, settles on an area that connects with his passion, and the pastor and church commission him near that same altar where he was saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Energized and filled with optimism and dreams for what God might do, he begins. At first, leadership and volunteerism feel romantic and fulfilling, but then turnout, enthusiasm, and engagement wane. New feelings of insecurity arise that not even his secular job produced. A minor dispute with someone in the church turns into a big meeting with the pastor. His pastor tells him that some people, even in his church, the only church he has ever known, do not like his style, decisions, or ideas anymore. What started as a spiritual romance becomes a malignant leadership cancer. He decides he has had enough. Life was better back when he just attended church, got a good message from the pastor, and worshiped God in a personal way. In other words, he should have stayed in the second chair.

The No. 3 chair has ruined everything.

Having had enough, he quietly leaves the only church he has ever known. He is mad and only slightly slams the door on his way out. That wonderful dance between integrity and anger is played out a hundred times each day in the American church. Another hurt leader who only wanted to serve, but ended up exasperated, has gone searching for a new church.

Welcome to empty chair No. 3.

All these chairs are vital, but chair No. 3 — the leadership chair — seems to mystify us the most. It is rare for a church to have long-term sustainable success with their volunteer leaders. More often than not, something always goes wrong. To stem the tide, the leader must see his mission as getting to the next level personally instead of corporately. Because the mystery of Kingdom leadership is that, the more we grow, the more who follow.

Hope to see you at the next level. By God's grace, that is where I am headed @



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Pelationally Based Ministry: Connecting Trom the Botton Up By Warren D. Bullock

At a sectional ministers luncheon, a young pastor said, "I don't usually come to these events. As far as I am concerned, they are all about politics, and I'm not into the political scene." I said, "Well, if you attend solely for personal benefit or for self-advancement, then that's politics. But if you come to these meetings to build relationships and minister to others, then that's

good Christianity."



This pastor did not seem to understand the linkage between effective ministry and timetested relationships with his peers. But few of us, if any, can succeed for the long haul without the strength and support of close friendships. While it is true that ministers meetings rarely foster deep relationships, they can serve to initiate them. Surface encounters can develop into lifelong friendships that enrich and enhance our lives and ministries.

Initiating and developing relationships was so important to Jesus that even before His first miracle and concurrent with His first preaching tour into Galilee, He began calling those whom we know as the Twelve. While multitudes heard

His message and saw His miracles, He expounded the deeper truths of the Kingdom and revealed His heart to these trusted disciples. In His hour of travail in Gethsemane, He invited those with whom He had the closest relationship to be near Him. His intercessions recorded in John 17 include His understanding that these friends were "those you [God] have given me" (John 17:9). If we view positive relationships as God's gift to us, we will not only value them, we will nurture them.

Within the Twelve, three disciples had greater access to Jesus than He gave to the others. He not only invited Peter, James, and John to go farther into the Garden of Gethsemane with Him, but they were also privileged to see His transfiguration, experiences the other disciples did not have. And from the three, John is the only one the Bible calls "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23). This does not mean Jesus did not love the others, but that He had an especially close relationship with John. This relationship was so close that when Jesus was dying, He entrusted John with the care of His mother, Mary.

If we conclude from this that Jesus was discriminatory in His selection process and relational connections, then we have missed the point. Jesus' life and ministry teach us that relationships exist on different levels, from the most intimate to the superficial. All have value, but not the same value. The deeper the friendship, the greater the value.

FRIENDS IN THE MINISTRY

It is not uncommon that our best friends are those in the ministry. We share the same interests, similar challenges, and mutual hardships. We laugh at inside jokes about church life. We do not need to do anything special to enjoy one another's company. Just being together is enough. Keeping in touch by phone, text, e-mail, or Facebook is the norm. When we need someone to talk to, we turn to each other.



How barren would life be without such friends. They sustain us when we are discouraged, weep with us during grief, walk with us through the valley, and shout with us on the mountaintop. What would we do during these times if we had not cultivated close friendships?

IF RELATIONSHIPS ARE SO IMPORTANT TO OUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH, MINISTERIAL LONGEVITY, AND OUR FAMILIES, WHY DO SOME MINISTERS LIVE IN RELATIVE ISOLATION?

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FRIENDS IN THE CHURCH

ROPERADORAL DOALS -

From Bible school days I have heard that pastors should not have friendships with members of their congregation. In fact, I heard one pastor say that pastors need to maintain distance from their people to promote a pastoral mystique. I disagree. First, because you cannot pastor by long distance; and, second, because people are looking for authenticity, not mystique.

Relationally Based Ministry (continued from page 89)

In most churches I have pastored, I have had close relationships with two or three men. They were like my Peter, James, and John. Our friendship had developed to the point where I could bare my soul to them, pour out frustrations, and air personal challenges. I never knew them to betray a confidence. Many of these men remain trusted friends to this day. In pastorates where these relationships did not develop, I often felt very much alone.

Pastoral longevity contributes to nurturing such relationships. Over time you establish trust; trust does not happen quickly. With trust comes the desire and willingness to open up about both joys and troubles. Trust is a two-way street and allows for mutual sharing of hearts.

We need to be cautious and wise in our church friendships. But even if a friendship sours, and people betray us as they did Jesus, it is worth the risk. The benefits of being linked closely to 11 friends are worth the pain of losing one.

FRIENDS OUTSIDE THE MINISTRY AND CHURCH

Friendship evangelism is a dominant theme in many of our churches, and deservedly so. Relationships with neighbors and others far from God can become an open door of opportunity



to share Jesus. Recently I heard of a pastor who now has nearly his whole neighborhood attending his church. His interaction with them as neighbors has begun bearing spiritual fruit. In the process, he is modeling to his congregation a pattern of touching people's lives, not as a pastor, but as a neighbor.

However, we do not base our friendship with those who have not committed their lives to Christ on their positive response to our witness. They are not targets at whom we aim the gospel. They are friends we will love no matter what their response to God may be. Even so, a shadow will always fall between us and them, because "what fellowship can light have with darkness? ... What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"

(2 Corinthians 6:14,15). When a shared spiritual relationship is absent, our friendship with them can only go so far.

FRIENDS IN TOUGH TIMES

If we do not have strong, reliable, trusted friends, who will help us through the tough times? Whom do we talk to about our hurts, frustrations, and fears? Every minister goes through struggles and pain. He should not have to go through them alone.

Some pastors have been so jolted by adverse situations, and so shocked by unexpected trouble, they have withdrawn from ministry. The fight-or-flight mentality has landed on the side of flight. Even when they decide to stay and fight, the battle leaves them so emotionally spent and spiritually drained they resign their position in order for them and their families to heal the deep wounds inflicted on them in the struggle. Depending on the circumstances, one or both responses may be the will of God for them.

But in either case, dear friends who can walk with them through the conflict are of inestimable value. Friends establish trust through years of relationship, so pastors can express deep feelings without fear of disclosure. Knowledge of each other's strengths and weaknesses provides a platform for encouragement and caution. Praying together is a healing balm, an act of faith, and a positive encouragement.

When I went through a season of burnout some years ago, the care and prayers of valued friends helped see me through.

FRIENDS IN GOOD TIMES

When our ministries are going well, when spiritual momentum is building in the church, when unity of mission and purpose is evident, we might think friends are less important. We are enjoying blessing and success. But success has its own perils.

When we are experiencing success, we need friends who will hold us accountable for prideful boasting, arrogance, and feelings of invincibility. As ministers, we all say we believe in accountability, until someone holds us accountable. Then we accuse one another, even our friends, of overstepping their roles.

I remember reading about former heavyweight champion, Riddick Bowe. Having just won the title, he was facing his first Why Am 7 Afraid to Tell You

he level of relationship we enjoy with others is reflected in the kind of com-

munication we have with them. John Powell pointed this out in his book, *Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am?* He identified five levels of communication. We can apply them to friendships, marriage, and our relationship with the Lord.

Level Five: Cliché conversation. This is safe, with no real personal sharing. It breaks the ice for other types of conversation. For instance, we often use the weather as a beginning point in conversation, even with strangers.

Level Four: Reporting the facts. This level still sticks to what is safe and reports what someone else said or reported. We might share something about ourselves, but it will be in factual form. Regarding the weather, we might say, "Last night the meteorologist on TV said it could rain today."

Level Three: Expressing my ideas and judgments. Though still cautious, we start to share what we think, what our perspective on things is. "We need some rain. I hate it when it is so hot." This level is a fulcrum in relationships. If the person we are talking to accepts our ideas and judgments, we may go on to deeper levels of communication and relationship. If not, we can pull back and retreat to safer levels. This is where we need to be good listeners, so people will feel comfortable taking the next step in communication.

Level Two: Our feelings and emotions. This is not a recounting of the facts, but expressing how we feel about them. It may include sadness, joy, wonder, anger, frustration, or amazement. We trust our friends to understand these feelings and even empathize with us. "I'll be so glad when it stops raining. I get so depressed when it rains."

Level One: Complete emotional and personal communication. Nothing is held back. This is made possible because we have been building a relationship by communicating on other levels, perhaps for a long period of time. Nothing in weather talk is comparable at this level.

No one on Planet Earth knows me better than my wife, Judi. Why? Not only because we have been married for over 40 years, but because I tell her things I do not tell anyone else.

When we translate these levels to our prayer experience, some of us would have to admit that we rarely get to Level One. We are good at praying, but we communicate with God from a certain spiritual distance. We come near to God and talk to Him, but do not move to Level One communication, where God answers us back. He is waiting for us to enjoy prayer at its deepest level.

- WARREN D. BULLOCK, D.Min.

defense of the heavyweight belt. But his training for the fight was not going well. He was partying too much, spending too much money, and taking his daily training sessions lightly. His manager was concerned that, because of Bowe's lackadaisical attitude, his next contender would dethrone him as champion. He said Bowe's fundamental problem was that he had no one in his entourage who was willing to tell him, "No." Bowe went on to lose the fight and the championship.

We all need someone in our entourage who is willing to tell us, "No." We might not like it, but we need friends who challenge our attitudes, actions, decisions, and directions. Our friends do not hold us accountable because they do not love us, but because they do. They can keep us from doing things that could ultimately bring us down.

MINISTERIAL ISOLATION

If relationships are so important to our spiritual health, ministerial longevity, and our families, why do some ministers live in relative isolation?

Geography. Some ministers are not isolated by choice, but by geography. Those who pastor in rural areas may not have proximity to their good friends. They can utilize the best of the social networks to keep in touch, but nothing is like sitting down face to face. They will need to work overtime at Relationally Based Ministry (continued from page 91)

maintaining relationships that are enervating and encouraging.

Insecurity. Having struggled with timidity, I have sought to understand this form of insecurity. I have concluded, right or wrong, that the core of timidity is pride. I am too concerned about whether people will accept or reject me. Timidity is all about me. Rather than think in terms of how I can love and minister to others, I am thinking about their response to me. So insecurity may lead to isolation.

Independence. The "I don't need anybody" attitude is, of course, untrue. But if a minister believes this, he will not have many close friends. He will pride himself on what he is able to accomplish without anyone's help. The attitude seems to be that God is fortunate He has the minister on His side. But this same sense of independence often translates into rebellion against authority, thus alienating those who would be strong relational allies.

Fear. Fear makes us hold people at arm's length. "If they really get to know me, they will not like me." If people have hurt us in the past, we are afraid of close relationships because we could get hurt again.

Hidden faults/sins. We all have character deficiencies, but some have personal issues they keep hidden. It could be midnight viewing of pornography or spousal abuse. It could be finances in chaos or debilitating habits. Such secrets keep us from developing the kind of friendships that include disclosure and authenticity.

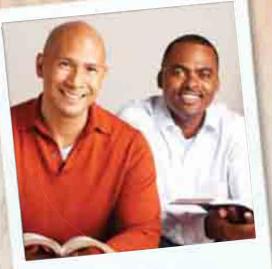
Time. Our calendars dominate our lives, and it takes time to build and maintain relationships. We are caught in the unintentional grip of tight schedules that eliminate forging intentional friendships. We wait for our friends to take initiative toward us, rather than our making friends part of our schedule.

These are not insurmountable obstacles. We can overcome them. In some cases God must intervene to change our attitudes, adjust our thinking, and give us new perspective. In other cases, we need to initiate action, pursue opportunities, and release our fears. Ministers who do not deal with isolation's root causes and do not develop strong relationships face the prospect of future isolation and loneliness. But those who have nurtured friendships over the years will enjoy the warmth and security such relationships provide. @



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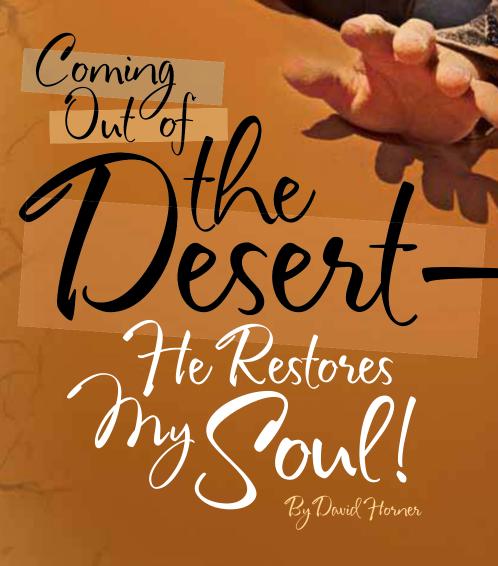


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The story of David and Jonathan is a classic example of a relationship forged in the fire of adversity. First Samuel records some of the qualities and acts of their friendship. They provide a portrait of a godly friendship.

- They became one in spirit (18:1). This was a process. They became united in heart.
- They abandoned self-interest and replaced it with love (18:1). Jonathan loved David as himself, even though he knew David had been anointed to be king instead of him.
- They established a covenant between them (18:3). This pledge of friendship bound them to each other.
- Jonathan warned David about Saul's intent to kill him (19:1–3; 20:35–40).
 Even though Saul was Jonathan's father and king of Israel, Jonathan subverted Saul's plans to destroy David.
- Jonathan defended David to his father, Saul (20:32,33). He was grieved at the injustice of Saul toward David.
- David mourned greatly after Jonathan's death (2 Samuel 1:25,26). Love inevitably brings the pain of loss. But loving someone else is worth the pain.
- After Jonathan died, David remembered his family (1 Samuel 20:15,42; 2 Samuel 9:1,11). David allowed Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, to eat at his table like one of the king's sons. This was done for Jonathan's sake.

- WARREN D. BULLOCK, D.Min.



WHEN SPIRITUAL DRYNESS HITS, WE SHOULD NOT DELAY IN Developing a plan of action to be replenished with The living water of christ.

The thirst that takes over when spiritual dryness sets in can make us

desperate enough to drink from any source, but we know this is unwise and could

lead to even greater problems than thirst. If the source is contaminated, or even

worse, poisoned, we can do more harm than good.

On a mission trip to Haiti, a few of us decided to hike over the mountain at the edge of the plains where we were working so we could see the ocean and enjoy the view. Our guide assured us it was not too far, so off we went with only one canteen of water for the four of us.

We decided to wait until we reached the top of the mountain to have a drink, in spite of the scorching sun and baked sand under our feet. Imagine our dismay when we reached the top and discovered this was only the first mountain between the sea and us.

Our guide again assured us the sea was not far, so we took a drink and started our descent so we could ascend what we assumed would be that last mountain. A couple of hours later, we realized the futility of this venture. No matter how far we managed to go, there was always another mountain. We realized we would need to ration our water if we were going to make it back without someone passing out.

We did make it back, but we were absolutely worn-out and felt completely dehydrated. We rushed to a small stand selling Cokes and Fantas. I bought two Cokes and guzzled the first one. The second one I savored, because it was not only wet, but cold. But something unexpected happened. Although there was immediate relief, the high sugar content of the soft drinks made me thirstier. The satisfaction I needed could only come from a pure source of water.

Corning Out of the Desert - He Restores My Soul! (continued from page 95)

When you need refreshment due to spiritual dryness, make sure your remedy is one that really satisfies. Many people in ministry find that times of dryness push them to find solutions that further exaggerate their problem. Some will immerse themselves more deeply in the same circumstances that got them into that condition. Others will try inappropriate solutions that appear to offer help but soon prove to be inadequate and harmful. The only way to find a satisfying remedy is to follow a course that leads you back into the fullness of the presence of the Lord.

WHEN YOU RECOGNIZE SYMPTOMS OF SPIRITUAL DRYNESS, Immediately develop a plan of action

In our episode in Haiti, we thought we had made adequate preparations for the challenge before us. Little did we know that the journey was farther than we imagined, harder than we anticipated, and hotter than we could stand.

After climbing the first mountain, we should have headed back. Our thirst at that point should have been enough to convince us we could not postpone finding a solution to our problem. Instead, we chose to press on and make do with what we had, insufficient as it was.

How many times have you found yourself thirsting from an arid period in your ministry, but instead of seeking an immediate source of relief, you convinced yourself that the mountain ahead could not be that hard to climb, so you just kept going? After a few such experiences in ministry, should we not learn to recognize the symptoms and causes as they are drying us out? When we see them coming and we feel their effect, this is the time to find a way to refill a dry and empty vessel. Postponing treatment will only complicate the problem and increase the amount of replenishing that must be done.

The decision to keep pressing forward when your soul is perishing from lack of spiritual vitality suggests that you think it is acceptable to operate without the fullness of the Spirit. You are willing to attempt ministry without the benefit of the only power that can make ministry effective. When spiritual dryness hits, we should not delay in developing a plan of action to be replenished with the living water of Christ.

YOUR PLAN OF ACTION NEEDS TO INCLUDE A BREAK FROM THE ROUTINE

Designate extra time and attention to restore what has been lost. After a particularly difficult death in our congregation, many of us were grieving with the family and friends. While we were sitting in the family's home, I glanced out the win-



dow and noticed that the community around us had not slowed down, altered its course, or in any way adjusted to accommodate what we were experiencing.

Others will not rearrange their lives for very long,

if at all, when you are going through a crisis. It is up to you to make sure you meet the crisis of spiritual dryness head on. Make time to deal with it adequately. The symptoms serve as a warning to take the necessary measures to do what you must do to be refreshed and restored.

If I am satisfied that my spiritual dryness is a passing blue period that will soon disappear, I will usually not take extraordinary measures to seek relief. But if I am suffering from the incapacitating imbalance that serious spiritual dryness produces, I will be more inclined to alter my normal routines and reconnect to the water supply Christ promises to those who thirst after more of Him.

This might mean taking a personal day to get away and sort the whole thing out in a time of special reflection, study, and prayer. It might just mean a brief change of pace in which I



adjust my schedule to allow for more time for physical exercise. Whatever activity I choose, I make sure I set aside some of the draining duties pastors face to reconsider my priorities in light of God's promises and provisions. You cannot continue to drift along with the flow of life's routines when you are parched. You need to take care of the problem.

REFOCUS YOUR TIME ON Reading and studying god's Word

This is no time to be stingy in the amount of time given to listening for the counsel and encouragement of the Lord. If ever you needed to hear His voice, it is during prolonged periods of thirst. Extend your time to include a greater margin for meditation and reflection out of which will flow more concentrated times of prayer. In Psalm 119:18, David wrote, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." As you approach the Scriptures, ask the Lord to show you where to read, how to stay focused, and what He wants you to know from Him.

Some find great comfort and nourishment by immersing themselves in Scripture, reading large portions, and losing themselves in the vast terrain of the biblical landscape. This helps them regain their perspective and realize they can trust God to work out His will and accomplish His purposes.

Some, however, find it too overwhelming to cover large volumes of information when their tanks are dry. They need a more intense exploration of a smaller portion of God's Word to allow them to concentrate on a few ideas and truths. Decide which works better for you. Get into the Word and give God a chance to speak to your heart and refresh your soul.

ANY ONE OF THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO YOUR SPIRITUAL DRYNESS WILL NEED ITS OWN REMEDY, SO RESPOND APPROPRIATELY AS YOU RECOGNIZE HOW EACH PARCHING ELEMENT INFLUENCES YOUR LIFE

As the Lord reveals what the problem is, deal with it in an appropriate manner. If you have committed a sin that has cut you off from fellowship with the Lord, confess your sin and turn away from it. How much of my spiritual dryness comes from my resistance to act on what I already know ... that Jesus stands ready to forgive and restore when I am willing to confess and repent.

If the source of my problem is relational, I reconcile with my brother. In each broken relationship, we can offer reasons why reconciliation will not work, so we avoid doing anything to bring confrontation. Yet the emotional and mental drain of strained relationships takes its toll on us. The only way to refill what has been drained is to restore the relationship. Until we do that, the reservoir of spiritual vitality we need to walk in the fullness of Christ will empty faster than we can plug the leaks. Throughout the Scriptures, God places the responsibility for reconciliation on us. Our course is clear: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18).

If your dry spell has resulted from neglect of your time with the Lord, make it a matter of conviction and discipline to resume your time with the Lord. Set up a plan and schedule your day so you do not ignore the only lasting source of refreshment.

Perhaps you attribute your dryness to the burdens of ministry, family problems, financial setbacks, health issues, or any other thing that weighs you down with anxiety. Do what you know you should do — stop worrying about them. Make a list of all that is worrying you and drying you out. Then memorize or meditate on Philippians 4:6,7. Once you have identified the key concerns and weighty cares that are draining you, follow Peter's instructions in 1 Peter 5:7. Why should we run on empty when God invites us, even commands us, to throw off those concerns and worries that drain our reserves? His counsel is simple yet profoundly effective — give it to the Lord and leave it there. When we can perform all the right duties without investing our hearts and minds, if we are not dry yet,

we soon will be.



Another reason we may be spiritually dry is that He has shown us what He wants us to do and we have not obeved Him. Can we expect the Lord to fill us back up so we can persist in heading in the wrong direction, pouring our energies into an endeavor that is keeping us from obeying Him? You may be able to trace your spiritual dryness to a fork in the road where you chose your own way instead the Lord's. Turn around and go back to His plan and see the floods of His fullness restore you.

READ OR REREAD A FAVORITE AUTHOR WHO HAS STIRRED YOUR HEART AND PROMPTED YOU TO LONG FOR MORE OF CHRIST

I have a hard enough time reading a book all the way through once — it is rare for me to reread a book. But when the need demands it, the only intelligent thing to do is respond. Find your way back to some of those treasures and ask the Lord to rekindle your passions and fill up your heart so the desert within awakens to new life.

REVISE OR REINSTATE THE WAY YOU SPEND TIME ALONE WITH THE LORD

What has worked best for you over the years? Is this a good time to resume that approach? If I am not careful, I can fall into a rut for long periods without realizing I am going through the motions without engaging my affections or my mind.

At those times, I catch myself at the end of my devotions without remembering one thing I read or recalling one thing I have sought or learned from the Lord in prayer. When we can perform all the right duties without investing our hearts and minds, if we are not dry yet, we soon will be. Shifting things around and breaking out into new territory will help us overcome the tendency to be lulled into a sense of complacency.

SHARE YOUR STRUGGLE WITH SOMEONE WHO WILL PRAY For you and hold you accountable to see you through to the fountain again

Do not get isolated. Get together with others who can walk with you through the dry spell. Admitting to yourself that you need the help of others is a big step. Admitting it to others is a bigger one.

The first source of help for me is my wife. She knows me better than anyone else and has a vested interest in seeing me do well spiritually. Because she also has a keen insight into spiritual truths, she not only offers personal support, but can also guide me to helpful resources and ideas that benefit me greatly. Many Christian leaders bemoan the absence of anyone around them to provide supportive counsel and encouragement, but they never even consider the primary person God has given them.

In addition to your spouse, seek the counsel of godly, mature men and women whose consistent and steadfast walk with Christ serves as a model of what you would like your walk to become. There is special value in having a group of accountability partners with whom you can share your life. If they are perceptive, they will likely spot the trends affecting you adversely before you identify them yourself. The Lord has a small group of people who are what you need to help bring you out of your desert. Ask Him to show you trustworthy and discreet friends who love Christ and love you enough to come alongside you until your spiritual vitality is flowing again.



AS YOU SEEK CHRIST, HE HAS PROMISED AND ASSURED YOU THAT HE IS SEEKING YOU

When I struggle in my pursuit of Him and flounder trying to make sure I stay connected in meaningful relationship with Him, He assures me that the pursuit is not one-sided. He is pursuing me.

This first hit home while reading Psalm 119. In verse 2, David speaks to our pursuit of the Lord: "Blessed are they who keep his statutes, and seek him with all their heart." Just as parched people passionately seek the water that satisfies their thirst, so a person suffering from spiritual dryness will passionately seek the Lord. But notice that David ends the psalm with this appeal: "I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands" (verse 176). The psalm begins with us seeking the Lord and ends with the Lord seeking us.

When I am seeking the Lord, my inability to find and understand Him is overcome by His perfect ability to find me and make me understand all He wants me to know. I sometimes forget this and act as if it all depends on me. God reminds me that He has pursued me all along and will never give up. In the desperation my dryness produces, I am more inclined than ever to forget about every other pursuit but the one that matters most. I need to come to Christ — the Living Water, the Fountain of Life Eternal — and find the perfect refreshment that has been missing in my life, making it "a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1).

So the need is real and the solution is sure. Draw near to the Lord, the One who gives the kind of water that satisfies so we thirst no more (John 4:14; Psalm 42:1,2).

Sitting alone feeling sorry for yourself in the desert when God has directed a river of living water toward you does not make sense. But sometimes you become so disoriented, confused, and unbalanced in your thinking that the sensible thing to do escapes you. The way out of the desert has been graciously offered to each of us through Christ. For those who have been called to be filled with the Spirit, living with emptiness and dryness can never be an acceptable condition. God does not want that for you and me. During those times when you find the arid wastelands surrounding you and no water appears to be available, lift up your eyes. God has promised that you will find streams of living water ready to refresh your soul once more.



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Apostasy and Backsliding: Biblical Synonyms?

Introduction

postasy and backsliding. These seemingly innocuous words have been the subject of endless controversy in the church for the last 1,500 years. In the 5th century these words pitted Augustine against his detractors; in the 16th

tine against his detractors; in the 16th and 17th centuries the followers of John Calvin and Jacobus Arminius



engaged in a battle that continues today. So contentious is this issue that Dale Moody once described it in terms that suggest it is the most divisive point of doctrine among Christians today.¹

For clergy and interested laypersons, the standard sources of information on this doctrinal issue usually further confuse the issue. English translations of the Bible vary widely in their use of apostasy and backsliding. For example, the KJV never employs the word *apostasy* (and its cognates), whereas the NASB uses it (and its cognates) 12 times in its attempt to capture the intent of the original languages of Scripture. Similarly, the KJV uses the term *backsliding* (and its cognates) 17 times, while the NRSV employs it only once.

A comparison of Jeremiah 8:5 in multiple translations yields multiple translation options: "apostasy," NASB; "turn away," NIV; "backsliding," KJV, NKJV. In the vast majority of other places and other words where terminological differences exist between translations, the different words are demonstrably synonymous. But given the intensity of the theological discourse surrounding *apostasy* and *backsliding* — and the difference in translations — the same cannot be said of these two words. To understand apostasy and backsliding, we usually look to Hebrew and Greek lexicons. We discover that the original terms behind these two biblical words yield mixed results. Many of these works define the relevant biblical terms with language that suggests *apostasy* and *backsliding* refer to the same spiritual status. This leaves students with the sense that lexicographers view these terms as synonymous. Yet, students have an awareness that passages cited by the lexicons in support of their is frustrating. We are seeking biblical clarity that we can translate into godly living and effective communication. So, if after surveying the best translations, consulting the relevant lexicons, Bible dictionaries, and theological wordbooks the answer is not clear, must we simply settle for biblical ambiguity? On the other hand, should we begin to count the resources that take a certain position and simply choose the one that has the most proponents? Or should we assume a position based on

The entire Bible consistently teaches the existence of two distinct groups who are outside the fellowship God intends to have with His covenant people.

definitions appear to be describing two different spiritual states with two different outcomes.

Finally, the student of Scripture sometimes exercises the "nuclear option" of biblical studies. He consults Bible dictionaries and theological wordbooks in a last-ditch attempt to comprehend with clarity what the Bible is trying to communicate when it uses these two words. Here as well, however, we see the same ambiguity encountered in the various translations and lexicons. By this point in the study, it has become increasingly evident that the authors of these various works, as good and helpful as they are, are engaged in the above-mentioned war that grips the study of apostasy and backsliding. Unfortunately, more often than not, the authors' theological persuasions shape their conclusions regarding the meanings of the biblical words that lie behind apostasy and backsliding.

Decision Time

For serious students of Scripture, this

the visibility, influence, education, or denominational affiliation of a favorite author with whose opinion we are most comfortable? This is far too arbitrary for such an important subject. The nature of absolute truth is such that neither the popularity of a position nor the persuasiveness of its promoter is sufficient to establish it as *fact*.

What, then, is the recourse of the pastor or lay leader? In struggling with this dilemma, we come to the nature of truth, the priesthood of every believer, and the principles of communication. With respect to truth, God has so composed our world and so created our minds that we usually recognize truth by means of the evidence that supports it. Regarding the priesthood of the believer, God has gifted us to read and understand the message of Scripture with the help of the Holy Spirit. As to communication, from our mother's lap we have been honing our ability to receive and process verbal and written messages with a view toward understanding the intended meaning of the speaker/author.

Every day we receive and understand hundreds and thousands of words that come from sources such as phone, fax machine, radio, TV, pulpit, Post-it® Note, and mail. Incredibly, we understand most of this onslaught of verbal and written information. We truly are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14, NASB²).

In defense of translations, lexicons, Bible dictionaries, and theological wordbooks, they usually do an incredible job helping us more clearly apprehend the language of Scripture. In this instance, however, we have asked more of them than we should expect given the nature of the biblical evidence and the intensity of the Calvinist/Arminian debate.

The biblical words behind the English apostasy and backsliding are sometimes, indeed, the same word. At other times, the same Greek or Hebrew word can give us two different shades of meaning. Consider, for example, the English word reservation. Most of us could think of at least four or five different nuances of this word. The same can be said of trunk, level, stop, and a myriad of other words. All languages contain this same dynamic. The key to understanding which of all the possible meanings a speaker/author intends is simply context. With context, we have at our disposal a resource that is more powerful than any lexicon or dictionary that can only provide abstract definitions.



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The goal of communication is to communicate clearly. Therefore, communicators provide contextual clues within the larger framework of their statements that interlock and support the thought that the speaker/ author is trying to convey. This is the case in all forms of communication from all time periods. Thus we can bring to bear on the sacred communications of Scripture all the practice and skill we have amassed since infancy. But it gets better: not only do we have built-in and finely honed skills of contextualization, we also have an exceptionally large body of material — the Bible — from which we can extract relevant data.

We need to ask: Are we willing to go beyond the limitations inherent within the lexicons, Bible dictionaries, and theological wordbooks? Is it possible that we as nonspecialists can go beyond the experts and achieve the clarity we seek? Are we willing to roll up our sleeves, get our hands dirty in the difficult work of reading large and diverse portions of our Bibles *in context*, think carefully and clearly about what the author is trying to tell us,

The biblical words behind the English *apostasy* and *backsliding* are sometimes, indeed, the same word.

and come to our own independent conclusions? A note of encouragement is in order: Jesus, Saul/Paul, Stephen, the Ethiopian eunuch, and Apollos were willing to do this ... and look at the result. An unwavering commitment and hard work are the only things preventing us from taking our place in that noble list of tireless, fearless contextualizers (who, by the way, had no lexicons, Bible dictionaries, or theological wordbooks) that we read about in the New Testament.

A Methodological Way Forward



With such a daunting task before us, where do we start? Here is where we come back to the question of whether there is a real, substantive difference between the biblical concepts of apostasy and backsliding or not. Since we have already consulted the standard tools of biblical study, it would make sense to make use of information gleaned from them. Going back to our notes, we find

that not only do we have a long list of possible meanings for the various biblical words in question, we also have a tremendous list of Scripture passages available to us as we consult various

> translations and their concordances. Similarly, we have many additional passages that lexicons, Bible dictionaries, and theological wordbooks list. In many of these passages, the key words do not appear, but do not

disregard these passages — most will address the same issue using *other words*. In this way, even these passages become incredibly helpful in clarifying the meaning(s) of the words in question. In this way the Bible is acting as its own theological wordbook, defining its own terms, a reality we refer to as "Scripture interprets Scripture."

Having found these passages, write or type the references in canonical order. As you do, look them up in a study Bible and add to your list any cross-references that might remotely be related to the issue. If you own Bible software or have access to the Internet, paste in the entire passage associated with each verse.

After you have completed your list, the real brainwork begins. Read each passage independently of one another, allowing that author to say what *he* wants to say, not what *we want* him to say. As noted above, this study is challenging because some of the biblical words have more than one meaning and can mean both backsliding *and* apostasy.

As with English words that have multiple meanings, however, we can still find the meaning intended by the original author by reading those words in the larger contexts in which they appear. When we do this, clues to the author's intended meaning should be there in terms of historical context, word associations, synonyms used to clarify, and descriptions of the spiritual status and the results of that status (judgment or forgiveness, acceptance of sacrifice or rejection of sacrifice, etc.). Last, label each passage as referring to apostasy, backsliding, or unclear. Resist the temptation to force a passage into one of the two preferred categories. Your passages will not all be equally clear, but there is such a large amount of material to work with that you can still be honest and expect a sufficient number of passages to address your issue. What follows in the next two sections is a representative list of passages from my personal study of apostasy and backsliding. (You can do your own study by consulting the more complete list of Scripture references in this article at www.enrichmentjournal. ag.org. Click on current issue, then find this article. There, I have notes that accompany many of the passages, while I provide others without notes to give you opportunity to practice the methodology modeled here.)

Old Testament Texts

The Torah/Pentateuch/Law of Moses contains dozens of instances where Israel falls into sin, comes into disfavor with God, repents, and is restored (e.g., Exodus 32:1–14; Leviticus 4:1–35; Numbers 14:1–20; etc.). Whether our English translation of the Bible employs the word *backsliding* or not, all the component parts of what we know to be backsliding are present: a temporary disruption in our relationship with God due to temporary disobedience, which we resolve by repentance, and then a restoration of fellowship with no eternal consequences.

On the other hand, there are many passages in the Torah in which the outcome is not as positive. For example, Numbers 15:30 describes the fate of one who commits premeditated, obstinate, unrepentant rebellion: "But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people." The verb "cut off" (*karat*) used here cannot mean "put to death physically" as an atonement for his own sin, as many in the eternal security camp suggest. Moses uses the same root in the phrase "certificate of divorce" (Deuteronomy 24:1). There it means legal and physical *separation*, not *execution*, whether carried out by God or man.

In addition, the broader context of Numbers 15 juxtaposes this person



(notice the introductory word "But," verse 30) to the person who sins inadvertently, acknowledges his sin, offers a sacrifice, *and is forgiven* (verses 24–28, and especially 29). In comparison, the one who "acts with a high hand" (a literal translation of verse 30) is "cut off" (divorced, excommunicated) from the nation (same root used again in verse 31), and "his guilt [iniquity] shall be upon him" (verse 31). In other words, quite the opposite of the guilty party's death ensuring his atonement, he must leave the camp bearing his own sin.

This picture is in stark contrast to

(backslider) with the harshness and finality with which God treats the "person who acts with a high hand." Therefore, whether the word *apostate* is used or not, the Pentateuch teaches that there is a substantive difference between the spiritual status of the two persons, the options each has, and their final estate. (For further study, see study notes on Numbers 14:25–46; Deuteronomy 13:12–18; 29:18–20; 31:16–18; and 32:15–43 at www. enrichmentjournal.ag.org. Click on current issue, then find this article.)

the "scapegoat" which, on the Day of

"bear[ing, nasa] on itself all their iniq-

Atonement, the high priest sent into

the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21,22)

uities." Further, the prophet Ezekiel

employs the same image (even using

day, "Because you have forgotten Me

and cast Me behind your back, bear

(nasa) now the punishment of your

lewdness and your harlotries" (23:35).

See also Isaiah's use of the root nasa in

his description of the Suffering Servant,

The Bible contrasts repentance and

restoration experienced by the wayward

who "bore the sin of many" (53:12).

the same verb) of apostate Israel in his

Jeremiah is most representative of the words of the prophets because he

deals so extensively with the problem of God's wayward covenant community. In one passage, he states that God gave "faithless [backsliding or apostate, *m'shuvah*] Israel" her "certificate of divorce" and "sent her away" (3:8, NIV). The rest of the passage, however, reveals says that when He rebuked them, they only got worse, and the next rhetorical question follows, "Shall I not punish these people ... and on a nation such as this shall I not avenge Myself?" (verse 9). Logically, the next verse details God's command to destroy the mutinous

Paul recognizes that some errant saints are reconcilable, while others have moved far beyond that point.

that God commanded Ieremiah to proclaim, "Return, faithless (m'shuvah) Israel ... I am gracious. ... Only acknowledge your iniquity ... and I will take you [back]. ... nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart. ... I will heal your faithlessness" (verses 12-14,17,22). The word m'shuvah here must be translated "backsliding" since it is God who holds out for them the possibility of repentance and reconciliation. In other words, the larger literary context defines the meaning of the word by the clues it provides concerning the status of the nation in God's eyes.

As noted in this article's introduction, however, words in all languages are capable of embodying multiple meanings. This is easily seen elsewhere in Jeremiah. For example, Jeremiah 5:6 declares that destruction will overtake the people "because ... their apostasies (*m'shuvot*, plural of *m'shuvah*) are numerous." Destruction? Yes, and verse 7 asks the rhetorical question, "Why should I pardon you?" The expected answer is, "You shouldn't!" God then



element of the people in judgment (verses 10–13), but to leave a small, presumably righteous remnant (verse 10) about which the prophets speak elsewhere.

In Jeremiah 14:10, the Lord returns to His description of this irreconcilable people, "They have loved to wander. ... Therefore the Lord does not accept them; now He will remember their iniquity and call their sins to account." Then He commanded the prophet Jeremiah, "Do not pray for the welfare of this people. When they fast, I am not going to listen to their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I am not going to accept them. Rather I am going to make an end of them" (verses 11,12). The people have crossed a threshold with no turning back. God declares that the time for mercy is past and the time for judgment has come (cf. the language "now He will remember their iniquity and call their sins to account," verse 10). Only destruction can follow, since they have squandered all opportunities for forgiveness and all aven ues to

forgiveness and reconciliation (fasting, prayer, sacrifice) are closed (verse 12). Even the prayers of one of God's most celebrated spokesmen were expressly forbidden (and not only here — cf. Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; cf. also 1 John 5:16 and my article "God Looks at All Sin the Same: Sound Biblical Teaching or Sloppy Bumper-Sticker Theology?"³

In Jeremiah 7:16 and 11:14, not only is the decree of judgment irreversible, but the previous calls to repent, God's mercies, His restoration of the wayward, and any of the reconciliatory language of chapter 3 are conspicuously absent. Therefore, because of the contextual indicators in chapters 5 and 14 that speak of judgment and destruction rather than repentance and reconciliation, it is not appropriate to translate the m'shuvah of 5:6 as "backsliding" as it was in 3:8. Instead it should be rendered "apostasies," because the larger literary context indicates that the breach between God and His people at this point is irreparable. (For further study and to practice contextualizing Scripture, see additional passages and study notes at www.enrichmentjournal. ag.org. Click on current issue, then find this article.)

In the section of the Hebrew Bible called the "Writings," the word *m'shuvah* appears in Proverbs 1:32, "The *m'shuvah* [waywardness] of the naïve shall kill them." But the next verse holds out the promise that "he who listens to me shall live securely." From the larger context, it would appear that the author believes those involved in this *m'shuvah* are still redeemable.

In another wisdom text, however, the utterly unredeemable scream at God, "Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of your ways!" (Job 21:14). The same divinely inspired author then inveighs against them, "Let him drink from the wrath of the Almighty" (verse 20). Therefore, as in the Torah and the Prophets, the wise teachers of ancient Israel were acutely aware that there are two classes of people who are out of fellowship with God: those who are yet redeemable and those who are not. Whether we employ the words *backsliders* and *apostates* or some other pair of words, the reality remains that throughout the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, its divinely inspired authors regularly referred to both *and* left clues sufficient for careful readers to discriminate between the two.

New Testament Texts

With an awareness of the Hebrew Scriptures, it should not be surprising that New Testament personalities are also aware of the distinction made in the Old Testament and amplify it. For example, Jesus makes a clear distinction between the misdeeds of one class of sinners and the misdeeds of another. He taught "any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:31,32). Whatever constitutes

blasphemy against the Spirit, Jesus declares this sin unforgivable, whereas He classifies other sins as forgivable. Thus, Jesus' teaching is no different from what the Torah, Prophets, and Writings teach. However, He underlines the importance of this distinction by stating the truth *twice*. To ignore His words is peril; to ameliorate them invites disaster (Matthew 5:19; cf. Revelation 2:20-23). Further, the remainder of teaching in the Gospels accords with this basic teaching of Jesus (cf. Luke 9:62; 13:27,28; John 6:66; 15:6, etc.). To continue this study, see the Scriptures and study notes at www.enrichmentjournal. ag.org. Click on current issue, then find this article.

The apostle Paul continues in the same vein, insisting that God can restore certain wayward saints ("backsliders," Galatians 6:1). Writing to the Romans, however, he insists that after knowing God (Romans 1:21), knowing the truth (verse 25, "exchanged"), acknowledging God (verse 28, "they did not see fit to acknowledge God *any longer*"), and "doing instinctively the things of the law" (i.e., obeying God, 2:14), some refused "to honor [glorify, NASB margin] Him as God" (1:21, cf. also verse 28), resorted to idolatrous substitutes (verses



23,25), substituted a lie for the truth (verse 25), and descended into the most vile forms of immorality (verses 24,26,27). They did these things despite the fact they knew God has consigned those who do such things to death (verse 32). Having descended to this point, God simply gave them the desires of their hearts: their thoughts became futile and

their hearts were darkened (verse 21), they became fools (verse 22); and they were given over to "lusts" and "degrading passions" (verses 24,26). Ultimately, He "gave them over to a depraved ("reprobate," KJV) mind" (verse 28).

Paul uses similar language in Ephesians 4:17-19 to describe those who have "become callous" (verse 19) and who are therefore "excluded from the life of God" (verse 18). He refers to this same status as being "seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron" (1 Timothy 4:2). According to Paul, these people lead others astray, stating, "some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" (verse 1). Not only consistent with the teachings of the Old Testament and Jesus, Paul is consistent with his teaching in Romans 1 throughout his letters. He applies the same two categories to Israel and the Church in Romans 11:5-23, to believers in Galatia who have added to the way of salvation (Galatians 1:6-9; 5:4), and to other recipients of his letters (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 1:19; 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:1-21, etc.; cf. Additional Scriptures and study notes are at www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org. Click on current issue, then find this article.)

Irrespective of the vocabulary one chooses to represent these two classes of people, Paul recognizes that some errant saints are reconcilable, while others have moved far beyond that point. The decisions they have made, the lifestyles they have chosen, and the state of mind they have adopted (their hearts having become "dull," "hardened," their consciences "callous" and "seared") precludes the possibility of them receiving the conviction of the Spirit and His wooing to repentance and restoration.

Representative of the remainder of the New Testament, John picks up precisely where Paul has taken the study. John recognizes there are those for whom

restoration is still possible, but there also is another group for whom this is no longer an option. In 1 John 5:16, he notes, "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this" (italics added). In addition to this text, there are other texts that make the same point (Hebrews 3:12; 4:11; 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 12:15-17,25; 2 Peter 2:20. See a longer list with study notes at www.enrichmentjournal. ag.org. Click on current issue, then find this article.)

Conclusion

In this study I have attempted to bypass the logjam of terminology and the endless rhetoric associated with the approach in which each side merely parrots the conclusions of its favorite lexicographers and commentators. In the spirit of Dale Moody, I have attempted an approach grounded in a fresh, contextualized reading of Scripture that allows it to define its own terms.

I conclude that the entire Bible consistently teaches the existence of two distinct groups who are outside the fellowship God intends to have with His covenant people: one which we can still reach, and another which has insulated itself from the gentle, merciful, convicting power of God's Spirit, whose purpose it is to correct and restore.

God's people seldom hear this distinction articulated today. Consequently, the many students and laypeople with whom I work are often completely unaware of this biblical reality and the Scriptures on which it is founded. While there are still those among us who are redeemable, and in light of the fearful prospect of judgment awaiting those who are approaching a seared, callous conscience, let us "have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire ... hating even the garment polluted by the flesh" (Jude 23). @

NOTES

- Dale Moody, The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 348.
- Unless noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible[®], Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission (www. Lockman.org).
- W.E. Nunnally, "God Looks at All Sin the Same: Sound Biblical Teaching or Sloppy Bumper Sticker Theology?" *Enrichment* journal 13, no 1 (Winter 2008): 110–114, or at http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200801/200801_ 110_GodLooksSin.cfm.

Managing the Mayhem of Ministry / CAL LEMON

SEVEN SKILLS for Fair Fighting in the Fellowship

he tenor of the voice was shrill and the tone was strident. Your mind and spirit whispered, *Oh*, *Lord*, no.

It may be the congregation's annual business meeting, perhaps a board of elders retreat, or just lunch with a ministry influential power broker.

Someone in your church vehemently disagreed with your opinion, decision, or spiritual direction. At this moment there were some unholy thoughts beginning to percolate between your ears, and defensiveness started erecting high and wide emotional walls between you and the accusatory speaker.

Sound familiar?

The Church's Choices for Fighting

The dull axe of willful character assassination, lying, personal empire building, malicious gossip, overt selfishness — you know, dirty fighting has cleaved the Church down the middle since its inception.

For those of us who have spent much of our lifetime drumming a padded altar with frustration and anger over saints who seem to savor schism, conflict has been the fly in our spiritual soup. Preaching, teaching, and caring fill us up, but the downside of the ministry is confronting the outliers of the faith.

In my opinion, the ultimate expression of the church's spirituality is not its noise, news, or numbers; rather, the watching, unbelieving world closely examines how we fight. If our holy tag-team wrestling matches mimic Wall Street or Washington, the unbeliever mutters, "I don't need more on Sunday with what I have to put up with the rest of the week." The definable difference of our faith fellowship is how we choose to resolve our differences.

Two choices are quite simple. Our fellowship can replay the same, tired conflict resolution techniques taught to us by the media and the mavens of manipulation who conclude, "only the weak lose ... never let them see you sweat." We call this *dirty fighting*.

The other choice is fair fighting which, I am convinced, is thoroughly biblical.

The Framework for Fair Fighting

We build the methodology for fair fighting on the following seven assumptions: (1) conflict is inevitable and normal in any organization; (2) the parties involved in conflict resolution have more to gain by resolving the presenting problems than choosing avoidance; (3) active, empathic listening is an essential skill both parties must practice; (4) time is an essential ingredient that brings reason to the resolution process; (5) both parties will have to lose something for a win-win solution to result; (6) effectively resolving conflict is the mark of a proactive, positive ministry; and (7) the causes of conflict are usually "cognitive" (what color to paint the women's restroom or the amount of money allocated in next year's budget for staff continuing education), but the results are always an "affect" (emotional) experience.

The Skills for Fair Fighting in the Fellowship

The first of seven skills is an honest talk ... with you.

Conflict will never morph into resolution or restitution if you do not



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acknowledge it. Someone (and that person needs to be you) has to *own* the responsibility of truthfulness and say to a mirror, "You know there is a problem between you and ______.

What do you plan to say and do to begin

between us and another person, it is time for talk ... self talk.

The second skill may seem unnecessary, that is, unless you do it incorrectly. The simple fact is resolving conflict in front of a crowd never works. This

Preaching, teaching, and caring fill us up, but the downside of the ministry is confronting the outliers of the faith.

the process of reconciliation?"

Avoidance is a wonderful ego-defense mechanism. When we sense the conflict-resolution process can be personally difficult or painful, we often create space — sometimes for years.

There is nothing wrong with taking time to pray, reason, and get in control emotionally; there is something very wrong when comfortable silence buries personal honesty and responsibility.

When we know in our spirit and natural intuition there is a growing chasm conversation must be a private moment.

If there are other people within earshot, your resolution to this conflict will be emotionally polluted with a communication principle called triangulation. When there is an observer (a person or a group) to a conversation, both parties will begin to amend their words and agenda to play to the crowd. Before long these two people will no longer be talking to each other; they will be playing to the stands.

So, take time to strategize the right

physical environment where you can roll out the nouns and verbs that will grease the wheels of fair fighting.

Practical suggestions for creating privacy include posting a Do Not Disturb sign on a door and asking the other person to turn off or mute a cell phone.

The third skill is a decision to begin the conversation with an "I" statement and not a "you" comment. Do not begin the session with, "Well, you have once again created havoc in this ministry." Those words are an interpersonal disaster waiting to happen.

Try this, "I sense you have been disappointed with the direction I have outlined for this ministry. Tell me, am I correct with my assumption?"

There, you said it. You gave status to the resistance with those simple, caring words. Notice, we can take the resistance out of the other person's position or opinion by accurately saying what has been lurking in the nonverbal jungle between us. Silence, over a long period of time, creates distortion.

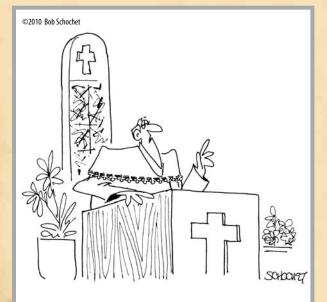
Therefore, a statement you own (the "I sense you have been disappointed") followed with a question ("am I correct about my assumption?") is, indeed, the biblical formula for negotiating the initial stages of conflict resolution (see Ephesians 4:25).

The fourth skill is the one most personally demanding: active listening.

Dr. Carl Rogers, a noted psychoanalyst, called active listening "unconditional positive regard." Those three words simply mean when the other person is speaking, we give this individual the message; "Right now, you are the most important person to me, and I am temporarily suspending judgment and my agenda to hear you and your story."

This is a skill we have brought, with alacrity, to sharing the good news, but not always to listening to someone with whom we disagree. You see we usually vote when we listen. When the vote is yea, we like what we are hearing and we listen. When we pull the lever for nay, our body and smile may remain in front of the offending person but our neocortex has just vacated our cranial cavity. We nod in agreement but cannot wait for a fitting place to pull the plug on this conversation.

Assuming we have genuinely listened, it is time for **the fifth skill**: reflect and reframe. The reflecting process in



"And it came to pass that the Lord giveth and the government taketh away."

resolving conflict is a liberal use of paraphrasing. The linguistic formula would sound like this, "If I have heard you correctly, you have observed me as an insensitive leader who has no time or patience for others in this ministry who do not agree with me. Have I accurately reflected your thoughts?"

You may be saying to yourself, "There is no way I could ever say that." Here are the two advantages of using reflection. First, reflection communicates you have been an accurate listener. Second, the precision and candor of your words will move the two of you from filling the air with plastic platitudes. For conflict to find resolution, there have to be real words representing real thoughts and feelings.

Now, it is time for the reframing.

Again, using an "I" statement, the person committed to fair fighting may respond with, "I understand what you have said and for the following reasons I agree with you (or do not agree)."

Reframing is the Pauline principle of "speaking the truth in love." Too often spiritual leaders become dishonest with themselves and/or the other person to "keep the peace, get this over with, and move on." The problem is there is no moving on when both parties know there has been no sincere effort to resolve the conflict.

The sixth skill is resolution.

Resolution does not mean both sides in conflict will be pleased; rather, resolution does mean there is a clearly understood plan for bridging an emotional chasm.

The plan is a mutually discussed set of actions or changes in attitudes. Both parties can contribute components to the plan. This is a form of win-win negotiations.

The win-win is predicated on a lose-



lose process. In other words, when each party in a conflict watches the other person surrender something important to him, it is perceived as a win for the other side.

Undoubtedly you are saying to yourself, "What if there is nothing I can surrender because my position is correct?" Fair fighting requires an effort at accommodation. The question now is, "What are the benefits to me, the ministry, or our future working relationship if I accommodate the other person's need(s) on the other side of this issue?"

Win-win conflict resolution is, in effect, a form of tacit collusion. Both parties admit to themselves there is more to gain by losing than winning everything.

Serving Up the Seventh Skill

The six skills you have just learned I have taught and coached leaders how to use in corporate America. And, they work.

Unfortunately, I cannot add the seventh skill in a corporate boardroom. This one is built on servanthood ... often a foreign idea in an executive suite.

The seventh skill is a spiritual discipline: praying for each other.

The apostle Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus is the manual for fair fighting in the fellowship. These splintered saints were screaming at each other across the walls of worship, but they could not hear one another. Their divisions deafened their ears.

So, the apostle prayed. Paul prayed first for insight ("to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ," 3:18) and then unity ("Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace," 4:3).

People of the Spirit have an option for fair fighting when the first six skills in this article do not work. They can always pray for and with each other. The prayer is not to change minds or positions, but to change hearts. And, peace in a fighting fellowship is always communicated through the beat of changed hearts. **(**

Moving Leaders Forward / GLENN REYNOLDS

Turmoi/: Coaching Your Team Through Conflict

Competitive

Coach

Compromise

Accommodate

Avoid/ Withdraw

Collaborative

ost ministry leaders use little they learned in high school chemistry as part of their everyday tasks.

Molecules and the periodic table have little to do with theology or organizational development. Chemistry, however, is a vital ingredient for healthy teams in any organization. Sports coaches constantly talk about their desire for their teams to have chemistry — a connectedness that creates something more than mere talent can ever hope to accomplish.

On the flip side, teams with no chemistry are the death knell for any coach or leader. These teams add up to less than the sum of their parts. Whereas teams with chemistry put two and two together and get five, teams without chemistry put two and two together and get three.

In fact, some teams have so little chemistry or connection they are marked with the dubious moniker — Team Turmoil. A coach saddled with a team in turmoil needs to discover how to coach a team through conflict quickly if he is going to keep his job.

Reframe Conflict for Your Team

If you ask your team what they think of when you say *conflict*, most of their responses will be negative. Likely, they will say things like, "Confrontation. Arguments. Hurt feelings. Destruction." As the leader, it is your job to reframe conflict to help prevent your team from swirling into turmoil. To do this you must create an atmosphere that reframes conflict for them by debunking misconceptions about conflict.

Misconception #1: Conflict only damages relationships

Most team members have only endured poorly managed conflict, leading them to believe the only result of conflict is that it damages relationships on the team. As leader, you need to debunk their myth by demonstrating that conflict can result in stronger relationships forged through mutual respect for each other and each other's ideas. In fact, iron cannot sharpen iron unless there is some friction, some contact, some conflict.

Misconception #2: Conflict is always a sign of disloyalty

If you disagree with the leader, there is a misperception that you must be disloyal. As a leader, your ideas are not automatically right because they are your ideas. To lead a team through conflict, you must create an atmosphere where team members know they can disagree with you without being punished. Obviously, you can disagree without drawing blood and the leader's decision is final, but the journey to that decision can include all opinions.

Misconception #3: Conflict always results in a winner and loser

Conflict is not a zero-sum game. Sherman's march to the sea does not have to be the leader's model for conflict resolution. At the end of the conflict, there may be two winners, one winner, or no winner at all.

Misconception #4: Conflict must be avoided at all costs

If you train your team to avoid conflict, you will never get the best ideas on the table. It is often the creative tension that flows from resolving conflict that enables your team to produce its best ideas. How can you solve this problem? What can you do differently? Conflict can cause you to move forward as an organization if you manage it wisely as a leader and as a team.

Allow Team Members To Use Their Conflict Style



Most leaders assume there is one correct conflict style — their own. They — without knowing — expect all of their team to respond to conflict in the same manner. However, the Thomas-Killman conflict inventory describes five distinct conflict styles that members of your team may use. Leaders who coach their teams through turmoil know the conflict style of each team member.

Competitive

Some members of your team are sharks. They engage in conflict like a carnivore after a good meal. For them, they cherish around them is at war. If you ask them, "What's wrong?" they will almost always reply, "Nothing."

Collaborative

These team members have read Stephen Covey's books from cover to cover and are convinced the only real solution to the issue is a win/win. These wise owls will call for one more meeting to make sure everyone is on board. Unfortunately, it may take 6 months to

Most team members have only endured poorly managed conflict, leading them to believe the only result of conflict is that it damages relationships on the team.

conflict. They love the confrontation. These team members are the straight shooters. They tell it like it is.

Accommodate

Other team members are lambs. They will give in to anybody about anything. Put them with a shark, and the shark will never go home hungry. Lambs will take the blame and be martyrs even when it is not their fault. They will confess to things they never thought of doing to keep the conflict under control.

Avoid/Withdraw

The turtles on your team ask, "What conflict?" They pull their heads into the quiet seclusion of the shell and rest in blissful ignorance while the world decide what kind of copier the organization needs because the collaborator must hear from every group and have agreement.

Compromise

The foxes on your team are always ready to make a deal. They come to the budget table with a figure that is twice as much as they really need because they are ready to give a little and take a little. Let us find where we can meet 50/50 is their constant invitation.

To lead your team through turmoil, you and the members must understand and identify the various styles of conflict response each person employs in the midst of the situation and select the response that is most appropriate.

GLENN REYNOLDS is lead pastor of Bethel Temple (Assemblies of God), Hampton, Virginia. He is a doctor of ministry candidate at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, where his degree concentration is redemptive leadership and organizational development. Training your team to understand their conflict response mechanism allows them to name and steward their responses during challenging circumstances. could move into a new office. He deserved the corner office, instead. As soon as the employee unpacks the boxes, the jilted employee is in the

Wise leaders train their team members to look for issues behind the content of the conflict.

Help the Team Discern the Conflict Level

Often team members will only want to deal with conflict on the level it is presented; wise leaders train their team members to look for issues behind the content of the conflict. The leader often encounters conflict at one level above where the actual conflict is happening.

Following are common conflict levels:

1. Content. The content is what happened. For example, one employee complains that the supervisor should not have told another employee he

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supervisor's office complaining about it.

2. Issues. Often the content is not the issue. The real issue for the complaining employee is he feels the supervisor neglected him. He may feel the employee awarded the better office always gets special treatment. He may sense, right or wrong, that the supervisor does not acknowledge his contribution to the staff. The content often is merely the clue to the issue that boils under the surface.

3. Process. Perhaps the real source of conflict is the process. Perhaps the pro-

cess for selecting who moved to the office was fatally flawed from the beginning. If the process had little or nothing to do with performance, seniority, or merit, but with who asked the supervisor first or complained the loudest, the process itself could be the culprit for the conflict among the staff.

4. History. If the office selection is merely the latest in a series of real or perceived slights, the history of the relationship with

the employee could be the reason behind the conflict. If one employee always thinks the other employee wins, then that issue colors the office selection even if the process was appropriate.

5. Developmental process. The issue may have nothing to do with the work environment. If the slighted employee's parents constantly rewarded his siblings at his expense, then that stunted developmental process may be the root of the employee conflict.

Supervisors must force employees to dig below just the content to locate the source of the conflict and then move toward resolution.

Agree on a Shared Model for Resolution

Effective resolution involves a triangle of satisfaction. Unfortunately, employees may simply resolve one side of the triangle, leaving the team open to further conflict. For all three sides of the conflict to be secured, they must answer the following questions:

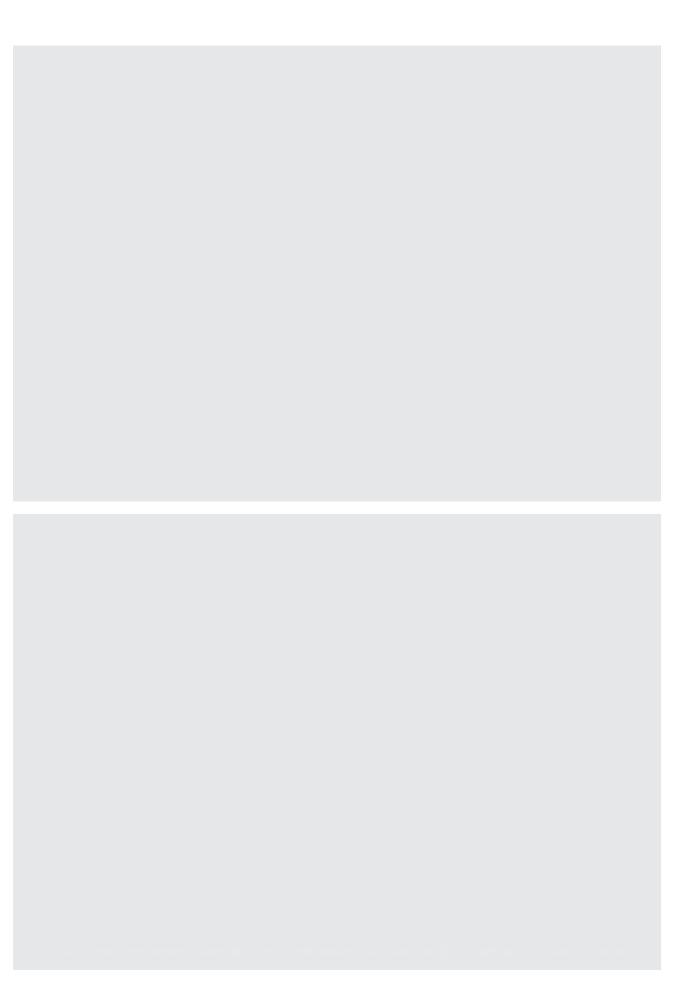
1. What? This question identifies the substantive issues — whether basic content or issues below the surface. The leader must reach agreement among the parties in regard to what happened.

2. Why? This question identifies the psychological/emotional issues — why did this matter? Why was this important? Why did this create conflict? This moves deeper into the history and developmental issues.

3. How? This question moves to the procedural issues. How does the organization move forward through the conflict? What procedures need to change? What part of the process can be improved?

In the end, the leader who effectively trains the team to move through conflict no longer fears conflict or confrontation, but uses the energy of it to advance the vision and build a stronger team. (9)





Run Well ... Finish Well / BY SCOTT HAGAN



Abstinence From Whine: Optimistic Leaders Go the Distance

iriam's pulse rate was soaring. So would yours or mine. Accountability was one thing, but having the Almighty personally deliver a lecture with a side of leprosy was quite another kind of experience.

One minute Miriam was exercising her "family license" by criticizing her adult little brother, Moses. The next minute her olive skin was oozing pasty white with leprosy. (See Numbers 12.)

Miriam believed her opening complaint against Moses was nothing more than a legitimate concern. After all, a Cushite had invaded her inner circle. Feeling nudged off her perch, Miriam saw Moses' wife as an outlaw instead of a sister-in-law. Not even her love for her brother could stop her tongue. Her mouth sought to do what Pharaoh's armies could not: Bring down Moses. With the aid of her younger brother, Aaron, the two sibling sewers erupted. Then suddenly, both her brothers — Moses and Aaron — looked on in horror as the God who destroyed Egypt now took on their sister.

But the negativity eating its way through Israel like a fast-moving cancer was not initiated by Miriam's destructive discourse. That was actually stage two.

The real story began days earlier. Numbers 11:1 tells us, "Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for the Lord heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp" (NKJV).¹

Moses prayed and the fire died out. But the problem of complaining was not over. Verse 4 tells us: "The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, 'If only we had meat to eat.' "

Notice the critical spirit in Israel began at the outskirts, or edges of the camp. That is where the fire first fell. The Bible calls the primary instigators "rabble" an interesting term. It means the "mixed multitudes." They were those who had tagged along with Israel for the Exodus, not because they loved God, but only because of their distaste and hatred for Pharaoh.

The rabble were not committed to Jehovah or His people; they only wanted to be free from Egypt. Because this was their motive, they lived on the edges of the camp. Worship was the farthest thing from their minds. How ironic that the whining began there.

This is also where negativity usually begins in a leader's life ... at the meaningless edges and the peripheral trivialities of life and leadership. It is the lazy edge of a leader's heart where he is most vulnerable. The enemy wants to undo the leader's fruitfulness and body slam his momentum by tempting him into patterns of negativity.

We slide into this pattern as leaders by whining about casual things. We do not realize that, left unchecked, whining may well conclude with a bout of leadership leprosy.

Satan loves to trap leaders at their negative edges. And once established, those edges will chew away at their inner Kingdom life.

Ministers can be the worst offenders. Sometimes we act no different from the rabble of the Old Testament. We



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critique the other guy's sermon and suit. We take shots at the church board ... our neighbor's lawn. All the light edges of life that really have no bearing on the Kingdom. After all, it's just a lazy edge. Yet, God holds a leader accountable for his personal edges where the trivial things of life exist. This is the most common way a leader allows for the deterioration of his influence wasting his energies and words on the unimportant matters of life.

We find the next stage where a leader

of pattern. A quick glance at Numbers 14 tells us that suddenly the whole nation of Israel began to complain. This is the natural consequence when our edge and our core become corrupt with negative feelings and words. Everything between goes bad.

This is a powerful leadership reality: The whole is the result of the edge and the core.

Optimistic leaders seem to lead for a lifetime. Leaders who whine, no matter how trivial it may look in their

The entire Bible consistently teaches the existence of two distinct groups who are outside the fellowship God intends to have with His covenant people.

sabotages his sustainability in leadership in Miriam's actions. On the heels of the fallen edges of Israel, the core relationships within Israel's leadership structure soured. This holds true today; we just have a tough time recognizing it. For some reason, many leaders, like Miriam, feel a freedom to criticize those closest to them in leadership. But the Holy Spirit holds us accountable, as He did Miriam, for speaking against those we love and those we lead alongside.

God wants our edges clean, but He also demands we succeed at the core relationships in our lives. God struck Miriam with leprosy because she allowed herself to become negative with familiar relationships.

For some reason, leaders tend to follow the same pattern. We whine about unimportant things and then whine just



as easily about the most valuable things.

There is an unspoken rule in leadership that seems to give credence to this kind book, usually fade with time. People have no use for negativity, especially in their leaders. They want to be inspired upward.

Ministry is much like manna; at times it feels bland and repetitive. There is a ton of room to get that lazy edge. There is also tremendous pressure in our executive relationships — those we go shoulder to shoulder with in battle. It is far too easy to become lax and casual and find offense with those we love most.

Sustainable leaders keep their hearts clean in both spectrums — the edge and the core. They realize there is too much at stake ... that the whole will either remain healthy or be overtaken by the whining that presses against them from the edge and the core.

It is time to abstain from whine. @

NOTE

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Dealing With Doubters: A Series on Defending Your Faith / WILLIAM LANE CRAIG

The Grand Design — Truth Or Fiction?



EDITOR'S NOTE: When it came to the creation of the universe, God just wasn't necessary. This is the conclusion renowned English physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking has made in his latest book with Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design.* "It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the Universe going," Hawking writes. According to Hawking, the big bang was a natural event that would have happened without the help or involvement of God. Thus, Hawking and Mlodinow's new book has made a big bang

among laypeople. But what about these authors' conclusions? How accurate are they? William Lane Craig, noted Christian philosopher and theologian, responds to Hawking and Mlodinow's new book.

The Grand Design and Philosophy

tephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow open their book *The Grand Design* with a series of profound questions: What is the nature of reality? Where did all this come from? Did the universe need a Creator? Then they say, "Traditionally these are questions for philosophy, but philosophy is dead. Philosophy



has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics. Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge."1

The professional philosopher can only roll his eyes at the effrontery and condescension of such a statement. Two scientists, who have to all appearances little acquaintance with philosophy, are prepared to pronounce an entire discipline dead and to insult their own faculty colleagues in philosophy at Cal Tech and Cambridge University — many of whom, such as Michael Redhead and D.H. Mellor, are eminent philosophers of science — for supposedly failing to keep up.

The professional philosopher will regard their verdict as not merely amazingly condescending but also as outrageously naïve. The man who claims to have no need of philosophy is the one most apt to be fooled by it. One might therefore anticipate that Mlodinow and Hawking's subsequent exposition of their favored theories will be underpinned by a host of unexamined philosophical presuppositions. That expectation is, in fact, borne out. They assert their claims about laws of nature, the possibility of miracles, scientific determinism, and the illusion of free will with only the thinnest of justification. Clearly Mlodinow and Hawking are up to their necks in philosophical questions.

What one might not expect is that, after pronouncing the death of philosophy, Hawking and Mlodinow should themselves plunge immediately into a philosophical discussion of scientific realism vs. antirealism. The first third of their book is not about current scientific theories at all but is a disquisition on the history and philosophy of science. I found this section to be the most interesting and mind-boggling of the whole book. Let me explain.

Having set aside a Monday afternoon

to read Hawking and Mlodinow's book, I had spent that morning working through a scholarly article from Blackwell's *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics* on a philosophical viewpoint known as *ontological pluralism*. Ontological pluralism exist. There just is no fact of the matter about whether there is such a thing as the moon. Ontological pluralism is thus a radical view that is defended by a handful of philosophers.

Imagine my astonishment, therefore,

The fact our observations are model-dependent does not imply that we cannot have knowledge of the way the world is.

is a view in a subdiscipline of philosophy whose name sounds like stuttering: *meta-metaphysics*, or, as it is sometimes called, *meta-ontology*. This is philosophy at its most ethereal. Ontology is the study of being, or of what exists — the nature of reality. Meta-ontology is one notch higher: It inquires whether ontological disputes are meaningful and how best to resolve them.

Ontological pluralism holds that there really is no right answer to many ontological questions, such as: Do composite objects exist? According to the ontological pluralist, there are just different ways of describing reality, and none of these is more correct or accurate than another. There literally is no fact of the matter at all in answer to these questions. So if you were to ask, "Is there such a thing as the moon?" the ontological pluralist would say that the question has no objective answer. It is not true that the moon does not to find Hawking and Mlodinow espousing ontological pluralism (without being aware of the name) as their philosophy of science. They call their view "modeldependent realism." They explain that models are just different ways of interpreting our sense perceptions. In their view there is no objective reality to which our models of the world more or less accurately correspond (7).

Mlodinow and Hawking are thus extreme antirealists. For example, contrasting young earth creationism and the big bang theory, Hawking and Mlodinow claim that while the big bang theory is "more useful," nevertheless, "neither model can be said to be more real than the other" (51).

One cannot help but wonder what sort of argument would justify adopting so radical a view. All that Mlodinow and Hawking have to offer is the fact if we were, say, inhabitants of a virtual reality controlled by alien beings, then there would be no way for us to tell that we were in the simulated world and so would have no reason to doubt its reality (42). The trouble with this sort of argument is that it does not exclude the possibility that we have in this case two competing models of the world — one

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WILLIAM LANE CRAIG, Ph.D., D.Theol., is research professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, California. the aliens' and one ours, and one of the models is true and one false, even if we cannot tell which is which.

Moreover, the fact our observations are model-dependent does not imply that we cannot have knowledge of the way the world is (much less that there through the human body; but if you are William Harvey, who discovered circulation, it does. Such a view seems crazy and is made only more so by Mlodinow and Hawking's claim that the model itself is responsible for creating its respective reality. It hardly needs to be said

Given the irrelevancy of their answers to the questions that motivated their inquiry, their book turns out to be quite supportive of the existence of a transcendent Creator and Designer of the cosmos.

is no way the world is). For example, a layman entering a scientific laboratory might see a piece of machinery on the lab table, but he would not see it as an interferometer, since he lacks the theoretical knowledge to recognize it as such. A caveman entering the laboratory would not even see there is a piece of machinery on the table, since he lacks the concept of a machine. But that does nothing to undermine the objective truth of the lab technician's observation that there is an interferometer on the table.

Mlodinow and Hawking, not content with ontological pluralism, really go off the deep end when they assert, "There is no model-independent test of reality. It follows that a well-constructed model creates a reality of its own" (172). This is an assertion of *ontological relativity*, the view that reality itself is different for persons having different models.

If you are Fred Hoyle, the universe really has existed eternally in a steady state; but if you are Stephen Hawking, the universe really began with a big bang. If you are the ancient physician Galen, blood really does not circulate that no such conclusion follows from there being no model-independent test of the way the world is.

All this is, however, beside the main point. The main point is that despite their claim to speak as scientific torchbearers of knowledge, what Hawking and Mlodinow are engaged in is philosophy. The most important conclusions drawn in their book are philosophical, not scientific. Why, then, do they pronounce philosophy dead and claim as scientists to be bearing the torch of discovery? Simply because that enables them to cloak their amateurish philosophizing with the mantle of scientific authority and so avoid the hard work of actually arguing for, rather than merely asserting, their philosophical viewpoints.

Why Does the Universe Exist?

In their book, Hawking and Mlodinow seek to answer three questions that they set themselves in chapter 1:

- 1. Why is there something rather than nothing?
- 2. Why do we exist?
- 3. Why this particular set of laws and not some other?

Curiously, their answers to each of these questions turn out to be very brief. In fact, (2) gets folded into (1) and so does not even receive a separate answer.

Hawking and Mlodinow's answer to questions (1) and (2) is an appeal to the "no boundary" model of the origin of the universe, popularized by Hawking in his book, A Brief History of Time. Our authors simply expound the model without adducing any evidence for it or mentioning any of the alternative models to it. Nor do they respond to the criticism that the so-called "imaginary time" featured in the model is physically unintelligible and therefore merely a mathematical "trick" useful for avoiding the cosmological singularity which appears in classical theories of the beginning of the universe.

Still, their exposition is not without interest with regard to the beginning of the universe. For example, they write: "The realization that time can behave like another direction of space means one can get rid of the problem of time having a beginning, in a similar way in which we got rid of the edge of the world. Suppose the beginning of the universe was like the South Pole of the earth, with degrees of latitude playing the role of time. As one moves north, the circles of constant latitude, representing the size of the universe, would expand. The universe would start as a point at the South Pole, but the South Pole is much like any other point. To ask what happened before the beginning of the universe would become a meaningless question, because there is nothing south of the South Pole. In this picture space-time has no boundary the same laws of nature hold at the South Pole as in other places" (134-5).

This passage is fascinating because if we take the analogy seriously, it posits a beginning point to both time and the universe. Despite the fact imaginary time *behaves* like another spatial dimension, Hawking allows the circles of latitude to play the role of time, which has a beginning point at the South Pole. When Hawking speaks of "the problem of time having a beginning," what he means is "the age-old objection to the universe having a beginning" (135) an objection which his model removes. That age-old objection is the question, "What happened before the beginning of the universe?" Hawking is right that this question is meaningless on his model. But what he fails to mention is that the question is equally meaningless on the standard big bang model, since there is nothing prior to the initial cosmological singularity. On either model the universe has an absolute temporal beginning.

So the question is, Why did the universe begin to exist? Why is there something rather than nothing? Hawking and Mlodinow advocate what they call a "top-down" approach to this question. The idea here is to begin with our presently observed universe characterized by the standard model of particle physics and then calculate, given the no boundary condition, the probability of the various histories allowed by quantum physics to reach our present state.



The most probable history represents the history of our observable universe. Hawking and Mlodinow claim that "in this view, the universe appeared spon-taneously from nothing" (136). By "spontaneously" they seem to mean, without a cause.

But how does that follow from the model? The top-down approach calculates the probability of our observable universe given the no-boundary condition. The top-down approach does not calculate the probability that the no boundary condition should exist but takes it for granted. Such a condition is not metaphysically or physically necessary. If the universe came into being uncaused from nothing, it could have had any sort of conceivable spatiotemporal configuration. For nothingness, or nonbeing, has no properties or constraints and is governed by no physical laws. Physics only begins at the "South Pole" in the no boundary model. There is not anything in the model that implies that that point came to be without a cause. Indeed, the idea that being could arise without a cause from nonbeing

> seems metaphysically absurd.

Hawking and Mlodinow seem to realize they have not yet answered the question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" They return to this question in their concluding chapter and give a quite different answer. There they explain there is a constant vacuum energy contained in empty space, and if the universe's positive energy associated with matter is evenly balanced by

the negative energy associated with gravitation, then the universe can spontaneously come into being as a fluctuation of the energy in the vacuum (which, by a clever sleight of hand, they say "we may as well call ... zero").

This seems to be a very different account of the universe's origin, for it presupposes the reality of space and the energy in it. So it is puzzling when Mlodinow and Hawking conclude, "Because there is a law like gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing in the manner described in Chapter 6" (180). Here it is said that the nothingness spoken of in Chapter 6 is not really nothingness after all but is space filled with vacuum energy. This goes to reinforce the conviction that the no boundary approach only describes the evolution of our universe from its origin at its "South Pole" to its present state but is silent as to *why* the universe came to exist in the first place.

What this implies is that Hawking and Mlodinow have not even begun to address the philosophical question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" For "nothing" in their vocabulary does not have the traditional meaning "nonbeing" but rather means "the quantum vacuum." They are not even answering the same question. Like the philosophy student who, to the question, "What is Time?" on his final exam, answered, "A weekly newsmagazine," so Hawking and Mlodinow have avoided the tough question by equivocation.

Why Is the Universe Fine-tuned for Life?

If they have failed to answer questions (1) and (2), what about (3): Why is there this particular set of laws rather than some other? The issue here is explaining the apparently miraculous fine-tuning of the universe for intelligent life. Hawking and Mlodinow express this idea by observing that "in recent years physicists began asking themselves what the universe would have been like if the laws of nature were different" (159). Unfortunately, this statement is very misleading. Scientists grappling with fine-tuning are not asking what the universe would have been like if it were governed by different laws of nature. Rather they are asking what the universe would have been like if it were governed by the same laws of nature but with different values for the physical constants appearing in them and with different quantities for the initial conditions on which the laws operate.

Nobody knows what a universe governed by different laws would be like. But because we are talking about universes governed by the same laws, but with different numbers plugged in for the constants and quantities, we can calculate what kind of universe the laws would predict (just as Hawking and Mlodinow illustrate on page 159-62). So question (3) is malformed as stated. The real question is: Why this particular set of constants and quantities rather than some other?

Now there are three possible answers to that question: physical necessity, chance, or design. Hawking and Mlodinow reject the hypothesis of physical necessity: "It appears that the fundamental numbers, and even the form, of the apparent laws of nature are not demanded by logic or physical principle" (143). Since Mlodinow and Hawking want nothing to do with a Cosmic Designer, they opt for the hypothesis of chance. Since the odds of our universe's being fine-tuned for intelligent life are so incomprehensibly remote, Hawking and Mlodinow appeal to the Many Worlds Hypothesis to augment one's probabilistic resources to the extent that it becomes inevitable that a finely tuned universe will appear by chance somewhere in the World Ensemble or multiverse. If there are an infinite number of randomly ordered universes in the

Ensemble, then a finely tuned universe will appear somewhere in the Ensemble by chance alone.

If the Many Worlds Hypothesis is to be serious science rather than metaphysical speculation, some sort of mechanism needs to be provided to generate the World Ensemble. The mechanism to which Hawking and Mlodinow appeal is Richard Feynman's "sum-over-histories" approach to quantum theory. This is the approach Hawking uses in the no boundary model to calculate the most probable history of the universe, given the no boundary condition, to our present observed state. Hawking and Mlodinow take these alternative histories that the universe might have pursued to be actual, parallel universes that are just as real as our universe.

Unfortunately, this is not science but a gratuitous piece of metaphysics. Feynman's sum-over-histories method is just a mathematical tool for calculating the probability of a subatomic particle's arriving at one point from another. One imagines all the possible paths the particle could have taken and then on that basis calculates the probability of its reaching the observed destination. There's no basis for interpreting this mathematical "trick" to imply the ontological reality of concrete, spatiotemporal universes.

Hawking and Mlodinow also appeal to M-Theory or superstring theory to generate the World Ensemble of universes exhibiting various values for the constants of nature. Such a speculation is problematic in a number of ways that they do not discuss. First, the "cosmic landscape" of 10⁵⁰⁰ different possible universes consistent with nature's laws that M-Theory allows are just that: possibilities. They are not real worlds, anymore than are Feynman's histories.

Second, it's not clear that 10^{500} possibilities are sufficient to guarantee the existence of finely tuned universes in the landscape. What if the probability of fine-tuning is less than 1:10⁵⁰⁰? This

may be especially problematic concerning the arbitrary initial conditions.

Finally, does the multiverse itself described by M-Theory exhibit finetuning? If it does, then the problem has only been pushed back a notch. It seems that it does, for as Hawking and Mlodinow explain, M-Theory requires precisely eleven dimensions if it is to be viable. Yet the theory cannot account for why just that number of dimensions should exist.

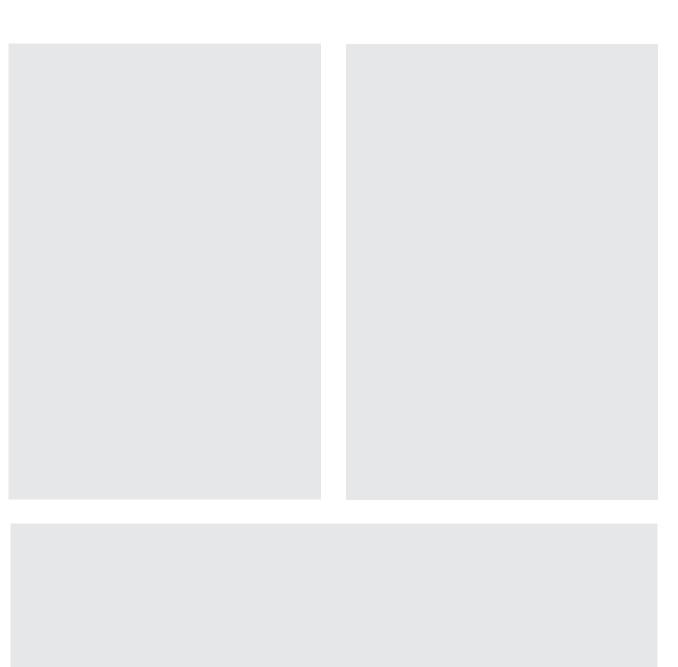
Moreover, Mlodinow and Hawking do not even mention, much less respond to, Roger Penrose's trenchant criticism of the Many Worlds Hypothesis for explaining fine-tuning in his The Road to Reality. Namely, he argues that if we were just a random member of a World Ensemble, then it is incomprehensibly more probable that we should be observing a much different universe than what we do, which strongly disconfirms the Many Worlds Hypothesis. There is no excuse for Hawking's failure to respond to his erstwhile collaborator's criticisms of Hawking's view.

Conclusion

In summary, despite Hawking and Mlodinow's vaunted assertions and constant sniping at religious belief throughout this book, there is actually genuine profit in it for religious believers, especially for those interested in natural theology. For the authors affirm and argue for the facts of an absolute beginning of time and the universe and of the apparently miraculous finetuning of the universe for intelligent life. Given the desperation and/or irrelevancy of their proffered answers to the questions that motivated their inquiry, their book turns out to be quite supportive of the existence of a transcendent Creator and Designer of the cosmos. @

NOTE

1. Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010), 5.



Human Enhancement: Could Becoming Better Make Us Worse?

"A s for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field" (Psalm 103:15). The Psalmist describes the fleeting glory of human beings by likening us to blades of grass reaching for the sun before quickly blowing away in the wind.

Throughout the ages humans have endeavored to improve on the human condition, hoping to stand taller and longer in the sun before fading away. In the last century, modern medicine delivered breakthroughs that lengthened the average lifespan in the United States by more than 30 years.¹ Since 1900, infant mortality has decreased 90 percent and maternal mortality decreased 99 percent.² Not only do we live longer today than we did a century ago, we also benefit from options to help us live better. Vaccinations enhance our immune system, vitamins optimize our health, and exercise and diet slow our aging process. We can take medicines to lift our moods, boost our performance, and sharpen our concentration.

The 21st century promises to bring advances in biotechnology that can enhance our lives as well as cure our diseases. People will look to their pastor for guidance in discerning how to respond to the cultural trend to embrace human enhancement. What are the spiritual implications of using medication to block painful memories or brighten our mood? Do we honor God when we perfect our athletic prowess through biotechnology instead of simply honing our innate abilities? Certainly Christian leaders should welcome and laud medical achievements that improve our health and productivity. Yet, pastors need to caution their flock to judge each new intervention by weighing the benefits against the costs and risks. We need to consider the possibility that enhancements that promise to make us better could actually make us worse.

Memory and Identity

Our memory serves us well when we are able to remember facts and experiences important to us. Remembering more is not necessarily remembering better. Like a report stuffed with too many unimportant details, a mind that remembers all the mundane events of each day will simply become cluttered. When our memory works well, we encode the appropriate level of



emotions along with each memory. If we experience too little emotion when recalling a memory, we will be numb to the joys and sorrows of life. If we experience excess emotion along with a particular memory, we may develop post-traumatic stress disorder.

Enhancing human memory involves more than just increasing our capacity to recall facts. In fact, one potential enhancement for our memory may be helping us forget. Memory consolidation occurs immediately after we experience an event. During this process our brain encodes some memories more durably than others.

When we experience strong emotions, our body releases certain stress hormones. These stress hormones activate a small almond-shaped area of the brain called the amygdala. Experiments on rats show that epinephrine (a stress hormone also known as adrenaline) strengthens memory of an experience, while beta-blockers that suppress the action of epinephrine weaken memory. These experiments and others like them

point to a pharmacological means for taking the emotional sting out of traumatic memories.³

We learn from what we experience. Emotionally charged experiences often teach important lessons, so we have



brains that excel at capturing the memories of such experiences. For example, our survival may depend on remembering the lessons we learned in a close brush with danger, but we probably have no need to remember what we ate for lunch last Tuesday. A joyous moment such as the birth of a child has greater value to us than our to-do list from the first Monday in February 3 years ago. Sometimes, however,

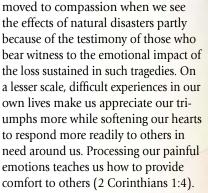
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What are the spiritual implications of using medication to block painful memories or brighten our mood? this link between enhanced memory and emotions creates debilitating pain in the lives of those who witnessed terrifying events. Would it not be right to develop medications to help these people return to mental health?

Part of the problem in using technology to alter memory consolidation is our current inability to differentiate between those who will develop post-traumatic stress disorder and those who will exhibit emotional resilience in the face of tragedy. While one approach to this problem would be to offer medication to all who experience a traumatic event, such an approach provokes ethical concern. Our memories, the negative as well as the positive and neutral, make up our identity. An Alzheimer's patient suffers from a loss of identity as his memories of loved ones and life experiences fade. When we emotionally

numb our remembrance of past events, we risk distorting our identity.

One deterrent to sending troops into war too easily is our collective memory as a society of the horrors of war. We are



Attempting to routinely medicate all painful memories would dehumanize us, making us weaker rather than stronger. Thus, we must employ any use of technology to change how we process our memories with great caution. For some people, freedom from painful memories might allow them to regain their identity. For many others, as well as society as a whole, loss of painful memories might lead to a distorted identity.

Mood and Reality

While drugs to alter our memory are still in the earliest stages of development, drugs to alter our mood have been available for centuries. Historically, people have turned to alcohol and opiates to brighten their mood. In the early 20th century, doctors discovered that lithium could stabilize mood. In recent years, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) such as Prozac, Paxil, and Zoloft have provided safer means to elevate mood. Pharmaceutical companies designed these drugs to treat major depression and mental illnesses. With the increasing availability of these drugs, some doctors prescribe mood-enhancing agents for those with normal neurochemistry but troubling life situations.

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Beyond the currently available moodenhancing drugs, we can imagine the mood-altering drugs of the future. With both current and future drugs in mind, let us consider the ethical implications of enhancing our mood for reasons beyond treating mental illness. Is there a difference between lifting our spirit through prayer, or a long talk with a friend, or a run in the park and brightening our mood by swallowing a pill? Suppose for a moment that the moodbrightening pill produced no adverse side effects. Certainly the pill is convenient. Yet, we must question whether the pill produces happiness different from the happiness created by our actions and relationships with others. Does the medication restore us to reality or create a false reality?

If by enhancing our mood artificially we gain contentment at the price of true fulfillment, we have not become better but worse. A quick happiness not based on measurable achievements, formation of our character, or meaningful connections with others is merely a cheeseburger ruining our appetite for a steak dinner. By altering our mood in the name of enhancement, we change who we are. Suppose a man falls in love with a woman whose sunny disposition is a product of the chemistry laboratory. He may wonder if her love for him would remain true in the absence of the chemical enhancement. Indeed, would his attraction to her continue if her personality became darker and duller in the absence of the mood-brightening drugs?

As Solomon observed, "There is time for everything, ... a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance" (Ecclesiastes 3:1,4). Grief, although unpleasant, is a season that grows a bountiful harvest of wisdom. "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure" (Ecclesiastes 7:4). The sadness that comes with the grieving process is a celebration of the connection we shared with our departed loved one. In facing our loss, we learn more about what is valuable in life, potentially realigning our priorities to live more meaningful lives. While mood enhancers certainly have their place in treating those whose grieving process has become unproductive and prolonged, we should not rush to medicate all unpleasant human emotions.

Finally, in emotionally and mentally healthy individuals, feelings serve as an important radar system, warning us that some aspect of our life needs greater attention. For some people, a feeling of discontent may lead to reflection on their spiritual needs, drawing them closer to God. For others, melancholy feelings of dissatisfaction may become an impetus to change that ultimately leads to better health and better life choices. People should embrace some negative feelings and then examine them for the message they bring, rather than sweep them away through pharmacological means. Healthy individuals may find their lives better enhanced by facing reality rather than obscuring it.

Performance and Effort

Another area open to improvement through biotechnology is human performance. Our quest for excellence and our competitive nature drives human beings to want to perform better on the athletic field, in the classroom, and in the marketplace. The ability of a given athlete, student, or entrepreneur to outperform his competitors depends on a mixture of genetic endowment and human effort. Yet, people look for an easy way to obtain a competitive advantage. Athletes turn to steroids and erythropoietin to enhance their performance. Students resort to off-label use of Ritalin to enhance their concentration when studying for exams. Entrepreneurs working long hours enhance their alertness with caffeine and combat jet lag with modafinil. We can expect this trend to continue as biotechnology brings us safer and more effective drugs.

Beyond drugs, gene therapy may provide future means of enhancing athletic

A Pontius' Puddle





If by enhancing our mood artificially we gain contentment at the price of true fulfillment, we have not become better, but worse.

performance by boosting red blood cell production, increasing muscle mass, or altering fat metabolism. Traditional blood or urine tests would not detect these genetic changes. Of course, the safety of using gene therapy for performance enhancement is a major concern. Genetic manipulations often lead to unknown and unwanted alterations in genes other than the target gene, typically resulting in cancer. Even if such enhancements were safe, ethical problems would remain.

Participating in sports embraces certain ideals that go beyond simply winning or losing. These ideals include fairness, teamwork, and dedication. Athletic accomplishment means taking your natural talent and working hard to perfect it. When an athlete keeps a disciplined diet and trains for long hours to succeed, the athlete's superior performance is a product of his personal effort. When drugs or genetic manipulations enhance an athlete's performance, the athletic achievements are no longer solely the result of the athlete's efforts. His victory results from what has been done to him as well as what he has done.

Weakening the link between performance and effort cheapens the value of performance. The enhanced athlete may perform better, but he becomes a worse athlete in the process.

What is true for athletics is also true for academics. Students who short circuit the learning process by using drugs to improve their concentration or alertness miss out on important life lessons such as time-management skills and achieving the proper balance between work, play, and rest. While drugs may enhance performance in the short term, long-term achievement suffers. Both the athlete and the student develop character by applying their best effort to develop their innate abilities. Sometimes a person's best efforts may be insufficient to win a race or obtain the highest grade in the class. However, the experience of trying one's best even in the face of limitations may prove to be a better prize than the achievement originally sought.

From a spiritual point of view, we look on genetic abilities, usually called talent, as a gift from God. We have a responsibility to develop the talents God has given us (Matthew 25:14–30; Luke 19:12–27). God has not given everyone the same talents or the same extent of talent. Yet, we please the One who made us when we work diligently with what He has given us.

Conclusion

Seeking ways to improve human life is not wrong. We need not fear technological progress. Medical advances in combating infectious diseases in the last century have greatly helped humanity. Medical missionaries seek to spread the blessings of such knowledge to developing countries as a means of showing compassion while sharing the gospel. When we live longer, healthier lives, we become more effective in doing the work God has given us. Extending the average human life span in the current century will require that medicine solve the problems of cardiovascular disease and cancer. Surely, the challenge is formidable.

Not every enhancement medical science discovers, however, will necessarily bring improvement. People need their pastor to help them distinguish between helpful and harmful interventions. In addition, pastors minister to the human needs that drive the quest for human enhancement. Certainly, people struggling with painful memories have deep spiritual and emotional needs. They need to hear the biblical message of forgiveness, redemption, and renewal. While people with severe depression will need medical intervention, a multitude of people have normal neurochemistry but troubling life situations. Compassionate pastoral care can provide the boost these men and women need to overcome their difficulties and move forward in their spiritual and emotional growth.

Our search for ways to improve our performance reveals our desire for significance, purpose, and recognition. Pastors can help people find fulfillment for these desires by helping them discover God's purpose for their lives and their role within the church and wider community.

In the Gospels, we find freedom from the pressure to perform, finding that God's grace is sufficient for our human weaknesses. Our earthly lives may be as fleeting as the grass in the field, but the Bible teaches that the Lord cares enough about each human being to number the hairs on his head (Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7). His love for us enhances our human lives in ways biotechnology never will. @

NOTES

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Q&A for Ministry Wives / GABRIELE RIENAS



I feel like a failure as a pastor's wife. When my husband and I dreamed about going into the ministry, I was nervous about my role, but I pushed aside my fears. God provided for my husband to pastor a small, but growing congregation. Two years later I am completely overwhelmed. I feel painfully uncomfortable and ill-equipped. I am musically illiterate, I am not good with other people's children, and I am a mediocre hostess. Public speaking terrifies me. And most of all, I do not connect well with people. Fitting into my role has not taken care of itself as I thought.

I have great news. The welldefined image of the typical pastor's wife is fading. Ministry wives are entering a new season of liberty. Unfortunately, the old, preconceived ideas still live with us and in us.



Not so long ago people expected a pastor's wife to play the piano, teach Sunday School, and run women's ministries, while at the same time hostessing guests in her home. She was to accomplish all of this while raising her children as perfect angels who could be an example to all. She was prim and proper, did not speak out of turn, was always kind



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and submissive to everyone. And, if the church bathrooms needed cleaning, she did that too, with a smile.

I heard of one church in the South that had a clause in the bylaws that stated they could not hire a pastor unless his wife played the piano.

Thankfully, times are changing. Pastors' wives have a newfound freedom to express their individuality and creativity. You no longer need to fit into a preconceived mold. More and more you have freedom to be yourself and to express your faith in a way that acknowledges your personality and gifts.

Does this mean you should cast aside all expectations? No. There are three things churches can reasonably expect from a pastor's wife:

She needs to use her life (gifts, experiences, knowledge) to glorify God. This includes a growing, developing relationship with her Savior. The format, the setting, and the details are flexible, but somewhere in life and ministry, service to the church must be evident. This is true of every believer, and the pastor's wife is not exempt.

She needs to serve her husband and family as her first calling and priority. This means she must negotiate ministry input, role, and responsibilities with her husband and family. This is not an individual decision, but one that takes into account the most important people in her life. Some pastors clearly desire their wife's involvement and input in specific areas. If this is the case, it is a marriage issue they must negotiate. For example, if a husband expresses a desire to see his wife entertain more, this becomes a marital request, and she needs to treat it as such. It is necessary to wade into

this uncomfortable territory not out of ministry obligation, but out of honor to a spouse.

She needs to maintain visibility in some area of congregational life. Freedom to the point of absence or complete disengagement from church life can harm a husband's ministry. Somewhere in church life her presence needs to be active and observable.

Within this overall framework there is room for flexibility and originality. I am thinking of some pastors' wives I know — all examples of women who function in God's design and purpose out of their passion and gifting.

- The church administrator who knows more details about church life than her husband, who is free to focus on vision and preaching.
- The children's ministry coordinator

whose passion and creativity with the children outshines any full-time children's pastor the church has ever hired.

- The lawyer who practices corporate law, ministering to the public with integrity and passionate faith every day. Working long hours, she coordinates weekly marketplace Bible studies and trains and mentors leaders.
- The mom who diligently homeschools their four children. Her compassionate servant heart is always available to reach out to young moms, happily providing childcare or meals for anyone in need.
- The prayer warrior who silently intercedes. Rarely seeking leadership or limelight, her humble demeanor exudes mercy and kindness to

those who need encouragement.

• The interior decorator whose thriving business allows for financial blessing and freedom. She frequently meets with individuals and couples to talk about financial planning and management.

Reading between the lines of your question, I sense insecurity and selfdoubt. Address this tendency. Deal with your lack of confidence spiritually. See yourself through God's eyes. In that place of unconditional love and acceptance, you will find peace and freedom from unrealistic expectations and pressure.

Happily, the typical pastor's wife is a fading image. Instead, you can be free to be the person God has called you to be, functioning in your gifts and supporting the family God has given you.

From the Light Side / JACK AIKEN and TORRY"MOOSE" MARTIN

he sun was setting on the first day of December as Pastor Mack drove home in the blowing snow.

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Traffic was moving slowly, which was unusual because every selfrespecting Alaskan knows it's a matter of honor to drive fast in the snow. As he rounded a particularly sharp curve, the reason for the slowdown became apparent.

The Church of the New Revelation, pastored by the Right Reverend Doctor Jones, while not particularly wellknown for its radiant display of the light of the gospel, was famous — or infamous — for its garish Christmas lighting displays.

There were strings of lights attached to every architectural line of the Revelation Cathedral and a huge Santa Claus standing beside a sleigh piled high with ornately wrapped gifts that glowed in the beams of several high-powered spotlights. At least a dozen fake trees wrapped in thousands of lights formed a backdrop for the scene. High above and across the front of the Cathedral,



the words Merry Christmas in 6-foot letters, blinked alternately red and green. "Holy potluck," Mack muttered under his breath,

ILLUSTRATED BY JARED VANBRUAENE

SOURDOUGH, AK -

Chapter Seven

SFASON'S REFATINCS

"I bet their electric bill is more than my annual budget."

As he crept closer, Mack realized he had not yet seen it all. There was another equally brilliant display at the side of the church featuring Frosty the Snowman, Mrs. Frosty, and a whole bevy of little Frostlings.

Drawing abreast of the church, Mack noticed that New Revelation's permanent sign displayed the phrase, "Keep Christ in Christmas."

The incongruity of that message caused Mack to wonder, *How did Dr. Jones let* that *slip in*?

A few days later, after four consecutive nights of Christmas parties, Mack found himself in desperate need of his morning coffee. As he entered the church office, he could not help noticing that Bertha was busy at her desk using a hot glue gun to glue cotton balls on white fabric.

"Are you making clouds or snow?" Mack asked while hanging up his coat.

"I'm making a mess is what I'm doing," Bertha replied without looking up.

"Something for the Christmas pageant, I presume?"

"Yup," Bertha replied. "Speaking of which. Sister Annette wants ya to call her back about her sheep." Bertha slapped a cotton ball onto the fabric more aggressively than expected. "And for the record, I'm still a bit miffed you agreed to let those dirty creatures be a part of the kids Christmas program."

"Why not? They won Best in Show at the State Fair," Mack said while pouring his coffee. "The kids will love them."

"And what if those sheep do what sheep do and go doo-doo in the church?" Bertha inquired. "Are the kids gonna love that?"

"Relax. We'll put down some plastic

JACK AIKEN is senior pastor, King's Way Assembly of God, Eagle River, Alaska. He is also the treasurer for the Alaska District Council and holds a master of science in geology. tarps and use lots of straw," Mack said reassuringly. "That way both you and the sheep will be 'relieved' at the same time." He chuckled at his own joke before quickly sensing that Bertha was not amused. He then wisely decided to change the subject.

The sheep weren't used to all the noise and activity. As the program progressed, they grew restless in their makeshift pen, drawing Mack's anxious attention.

"So tell me, Miss Director Extraordinaire, how are things going with the kids' program?"

The well-worded question with its blatant compliment worked its magic. Bertha nearly gushed her response as she set down the glue gun. "Those kids are the sweetest things, especially the littlest ones. But that Ryan. You know, the bus kid with the ferret?"

Mack nodded, acknowledging he remembered while carefully taking a sip from his cup.

"Well, I call him Little Mr. Mischief 'cuz he's always disrupting things and gets on my nerves." Bertha grabbed some more cotton balls to attach to the fabric. "But I finally figured out a way to outsmart him and keep him out of trouble."



"And how's that?"

Bertha grinned proudly. "I cast him as an angel."

"What?"

"I know, talk about casting against type." Bertha beamed with pride, "See, I talked Jake into rigging up a cable that will run from the balcony to the platform."

"A cable?" Mack interrupted.

"Yup, you heard right. See, the plan is to use it to let little Ryan slide down the cable holding the star with the Wise Men following him to the stable. Then, after he hangs the star on a hook, Jake will pull him back up to the balcony. Neat, huh?"

"So Ryan's been on his best behavior just so he can be the 'star' of the show?"

"Yep, bribery works like a charm. And so does hanging him from a body harness in the closet during rehearsal."

Pastor Mack's jaw dropped open.

"Oh relax," Bertha continued, "it doesn't hurt him. Plus he's gotta git used to the harness if he's gonna 'fly'."

"Bertha. ..."

"I leave the door open."

"Bertha. ..."

"It keeps him outta trouble."

"Bertha!"

"He likes it. He hangs there all silent and still until I give him his cue and then he starts wiggling all over the place and spinning in the closet shouting, 'I'm flying, Miss Bertha, I'm flying!' "

And I say, "You sure are honey; now shut the door."

"Oh, boy."

"Stop worryin'. There's enough light in there so he don't get scared. Oh, and speaking of light, have you seen the Revelation Cathedral?"

"Yep. Passed it last night and thought I'd taken a wrong turn to Vegas."

TORRY "MOOSE" MARTIN is a former Alaskan and an award-winning Christian comedian and author who currently resides in Sparta, Tennessee. He also writes for *Adventures in Odyssey*, produced by Focus on the Family. "Tell me about it. 'Bout half the town goes into a brown-out when they fire up all those lights," Bertha said while rolling her eyes. "Makes me proud, though, that at least around here we know how to focus on the real meaning of Christmas."

"You mean by hanging little boys as ornaments and locking them in a closet?"

"I don't lock him in the closet," Bertha said while pressing a cotton ball firmly onto the fabric. "Well, okay, once — but that was by accident."

Bertha grabbed her glue gun to begin gluing again. "Not that I ain't been tempted since, though."

Mack paused for a moment. He then set his coffee cup down and headed down the hall.

"Where you going?" she hollered after him.

"To take all the rods outta the closets," he hollered back.

Bertha let out a heavy sigh of disappointment. "I knew I should'a never told him."

At last the big night had arrived. The children's Christmas pageant was well underway and everyone in the church seemed to be enjoying it. Everyone, that is, except Annette's award-winning sheep. They weren't used to all the noise and activity; and, as the program progressed, they grew restless in their makeshift pen, drawing Mack's anxious attention. During this close scrutiny, Mack noticed for the first time that something seemed a bit *off* about the sheep's appearance. Their hindquarters seemed a bit lumpy — whiter, and finer-textured than the rest of their coat.

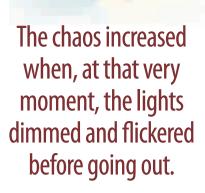
As they continued to mill about, one of the bleeting sheep rubbed hard against another and a couple of the lumps came off, revealing the gluesmeared cloth below.

Mack almost gasped aloud. No wonder Bertha wouldn't tell me what she was doing. She was making diapers for Annette's prize sheep. He glanced at Annette and quickly realized from her expression of annoyance that Bertha had neglected to discuss her homemade Pampers[®] plan with her either.

As the pageant was drawing to a close, the Wise Men entered from the rear to make the manger scene complete, and Jake launched Ryan and the Star of Bethlehem right on cue. Ryan majesti-



cally descended and the star came and stood over the place where the Child lay, but only for a moment. Suddenly, the eyebolt that secured the cable to the platform wall pulled out of the wall, dropping Ryan unceremoniously into the sheep pen. The big woolies broke his fall, but in their fright they leaped over the rails of their pen and headed for the empty center aisle. As the flock ran, their diapers broke



loose from their moorings and got entangled around their legs. It then only took the animals a few wild kicks to send the diapers flying through the crowd, scattering their contents.

Chaos reigned. Kids scattered every which way; Annette took off after her prize sheep; parents ran to rescue their children; and Pastor Mack quickly checked on Ryan to make sure he was all right.

"Woo-wee! That was way more fun than I rehearsed in the closet." Ryan said as Mack helped him to his feet. "If I'd known I was gonna drop, I would'a yelled 'Geronimo' on my way down."

The chaos increased when, at that very moment, the lights dimmed and flickered before going out, leaving the crowd in momentary darkness before the emergency lights came on.

"Don't worry, folks," Bertha yelled, "it's just the Revelation Cathedral turning on their Christmas lights. We'll be back on in a few minutes."

Giving Ryan a little pat on the back, Mack joined Bertha on the platform. "Everything is fine, folks," he said. "No harm has been done to man nor animal. You're gonna need to watch your step in the center aisle, though. The sheep must be planning to buy the place, because they just put a deposit actually, several deposits — on it." The laughter was weak, but the joke had a calming effect.

Mack glanced around at the stage and saw that the manger had been knocked over and Baby Jesus was lying abandoned at his feet, half covered with straw.

Mack stood transfixed by the sight. In a flash, he saw it for the parable it was. He suddenly realized the mad rush of holiday parties, decorative lights, shopping, rehearsals, and programs were just as effective at shifting the Christian's focus away from the true meaning of Christmas as the falling angel and the ensuing stampede had been in causing the Baby Jesus to be lost in the straw.

Consumed by a sudden desire to communicate that the real purpose of Christmas is to celebrate the Savior and not just His birth, Mack picked up the Baby Jesus, held Him up for all to see, and in the fading glow of the emergency light began to share his insight about the lost Jesus.

Later, after the audience had left, Bertha was helping Mack tidy up the church when she took a moment to offer him a few words of encouragement. "Well, I don't know how you do it, Pastor, but once again you've managed to put a soothing balm on a catastrophe. That little sermon you gave at the end about the lost Jesus is about the best sermon I've ever heard you preach."

"Because of its message or because of its brevity?" Mack joked.

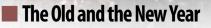
"To be honest, both," Bertha replied with a grin. "You really are the best shepherd this church has ever had, Mack," she said while patting his arm reassuringly, "and I want'cha to know that I'm real proud to work beside ya."

"Thank you, Bertha," Mack said appreciatively.

"But I'm not working beside ya this time." Bertha handed him the trash bag she was holding and then gestured toward the scattered diapers. "I mean, I don't mind helping ya tend yer church flock, but when it comes to cleaning up after real sheep — buddy, yer on your own."

A smile crept across Mack's face as he accepted the bag along with the "I-told-you-so" expression from Bertha that accompanied it. "Merry Christmas, Boss," she said before playfully adding in her best sheep voice, "and Haaa-aaaaaapy New Year." @

Sermon Seeds



CROFT M. PENTZ

TEXT: Philippians 3:13,14

INTRODUCTION

Yesterday is gone — forget it. Tomorrow is not here — do not worry. Today is here — use it. Live every day as if it were your last, making each day count. Then you will have no regrets.

MESSAGE

1. The past. "Forgetting those things which are behind."

- a. Forget past sins (Acts 26:15–19). Paul forgot his past life of persecuting Christians. Do not dwell on your past sin or talk about it.
- b. Forget past sufferings (Philippians 3:8). Paul forgot his suffering of 2 Corinthians 11:24–28. He could say, "None of these things move me" (Acts 20:24).
- c. Forget past shortcomings (Philippians 3:10). Paul forgot his past wrongs and desired to know Christ in a personal way. No one can have a greater goal or desire.
- 2. The provision. "Reaching forth unto those things which are before."
 - a. The promises of God (Numbers 23:19). God does not and cannot lie. Stand on His promises as you face the New Year. He will meet your needs (Philippians 4:19).
 - b. The plan of God (Psalm 143:10). Seek His will and do it. It is the most important thing. (See Romans 12:1,2; Acts 9:6.)
 - c. The peace of God (Isaiah 26:3). He will keep us in peace. (Note Jesus' words in John 14:27. Compare with Paul's words in Philippians 4:7.)

3. The pressing. "I press toward the mark."

- a. Pressing involves desire (Philippians 3:10). Desire to know Him. (Note Job's words, "Oh that I may know where to find Him" [Job 23:3].) We can find Him if we really seek Him (Jeremiah 29:13).
- b. Pressing involves dedication. Caleb could say, "But I wholly followed the Lord" (Joshua 14:8).
- c. Pressing involves determination (Daniel 1:8). Daniel's determination helped him later to face the lions and come out unhurt.

4. The prize. "Of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

- a. Happy call (Matthew 4:19). Jesus calls and asks that we follow Him. He will make us what we should be, which produces happiness.
- b. Heavenly call (John 15:16). This is not a request; it is a requirement.

He calls us to do His work.

c. Helpful call (Mark 16:15). God depends on our help to witness and win the world to Christ.

CONCLUSION

Accept Paul's advice. As you go forward, you will need three things: Desire — to be better and do better; dedication — put Christ first in your life; determination — to live an overcoming Christian life. You cannot do anything about the past year, but you can make the New Year happy and successful.

Thanksgiving in Gilgal

TERRY L. TERRELL, Burlington, Iowa

TEXT: JOSHUA 5:1-15

INTRODUCTION

After the people of Israel crossed the Jordan River, they established a memorial of stones on the beachhead at Gilgal where the Lord brought them into the Promised Land. They established another memorial in the center of the Jordan.

At Gilgal, the people were called to remember what they had been and what they had become in God. Thanksgiving was a part of remembering.

MESSAGE

- 1. They remembered God's redemption.
 - a. From Egyptian bondage.
 - b. Through the Red Sea.
- 2. They remembered God's guidance.
 - a. Through Moses.
 - b. Through the tablets of the Law.
 - c. Through the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.
 - d. Now through Joshua.
- 3. They remembered God's covenant that was first made with Abraham (Genesis 17:7–12).
 - a. An everlasting covenant (verse 7).
 - b. An everlasting possession (verse 8).
 - c. The sign of the covenant (verses 10-12).

4. They remembered God's provision.

- a. In the wilderness manna, water, quail.
- b. Now the fruit of Canaan (Joshua 5:11,12).

5. They remembered God's revelation.

- a. At Sinai.
- b. God's revelation was renewed as the Captain of the Lord's host appeared to Joshua (Joshua 5:13–15).

CONCLUSION

We need a Gilgal thanksgiving where we remember God's redemption, guidance, covenant, provision, and revelation in our lives. It will produce great thankfulness and worship within our hearts for God. It will also provide impetus to live for Him.

The Babe of Bethlehem

C.M.WARD

TEXT: "Ye shall find the babe" (Luke 2:12). "By the name of thy holy child Jesus" (Acts 4:30).

INTRODUCTION

Birth never loses its wonder. Christ the Savior was born. The great joy and excitement of Christmas is the fascination of a baby.

MESSAGE

1. Heaven participates in every birth.

- a. Heaven participated in Christ's birth. The multitude of the heavenly host sang because they knew the mission of this Child. He came to do God's will (Hebrews 10:9).
- b. Heaven is interested in every birth. Each baby boy can become a bloody Stalin or a blessed Stephen. Each baby girl can become a murderous Jezebel or a ministering Jochabed.
- c. Every baby is created in the image of God.
- 2. Smart people can be wrong about Christmas. What might have happened had the Wise Men come from the western world instead of from the Orient?
 - a. The big industrialist would have carried an order book. His concern would be for untapped markets and new sources of raw materials.
 - b. The advertising executive from Madison Avenue would be looking for big publicity splashes. His first impulse would be to look for sensational angles and issue press releases.
 - c. The Wise Men from the east allowed their intellect to be guided by God. "We ... are come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2).

3. Wise men see the message in the Baby.

- a. Herod saw only a rival in the Baby and tried to kill Him.
- b. Wise men see themselves in the Baby. They remember they once were infants filled with possibilities for good and they examine their lives to see whether they have become the kind of persons they might have been.
- c. Every baby is a reminder that, as surely as life begins, it also ends, and that we should prepare to die.

4. God has sent a birth announcement to all of us.

- a. Birth announcements come in novel, arresting forms, but none can compare with the manner in which Christ's birth was announced.
- b. A birth announcement calls for a gift in response.
- c. Our Lord is pleased if we give ourselves to Him. This is the gift the response He desires the most.

CONCLUSION

There are those who shut Christ out as the innkeeper did because their conduct is incompatible with the presence of this holy Babe in their lives and in their homes. You will never regret it if you accept this gift from heaven. He will comfort you when you are sorrowful; will provide meaning and fullness for your life when it seems useless and empty; will bring light when the way seems dark; will provide joy when circumstances are grim.

The arrival of a baby has changed the attitude and conduct in many

a marriage; and the Babe of Bethlehem has changed many lives. May God give you the good sense to acknowledge this greatest of all birth announcements.

My Times Are in Thy Hand

KENNETH D. BARNEY

TEXT: Psalm 31:15

INTRODUCTION

Our "times" are the varied events that make up life. The Lord shaped and ordered every one of them.

The knowledge of our times being in God's hand produces three attitudes in us:

MESSAGE

1. Trust

- a. If God did not rule all things, He could rule nothing. But He does rule all things, and this includes the smallest detail of the life of His child.
- b. God does not allow trials without supplying grace for them. He does not allow us to be wounded without supplying the healing for those wounds.
- c. Our feelings are not dependable, for many things influence them — our health, circumstances, and even the weather. The Word of God is dependable for it is independent of everything else.

2. Submission

- a. Like the soldier, the Christian lives under orders from a superior. It is a mark of a good soldier to carry out every order from his commander.
- b. The submission God asks from us is not the kind a cringing slave gives to a cruel master. It is the kind given by a child to a loving father.
- c. Learning to submit in small matters will help us learn to submit in greater matters.

3. Confidence

- a. Since our times are in God's hand, we know that whatever circumstances we encounter along the way, our ultimate victory is certain.
- b. Confidence in God helps us survive disappointments in other people. It will help us grow and mature in the face of such disappointments instead of being defeated by them.

CONCLUSION

Our trust in the Lord grows through feeding on the Word and a life of consistent prayer. If we neglect the Word and prayer, we are jeopardizing our future Christian life. The Word gives us fresh insights into God's working and a foundation on which to build faith.

For additional sermons, visit http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org. Look under Resources for Practical Ministry.

AN EVEWITNESS REMEMBERS THE CENTURY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

VINSON SYNAN (Baker Book House, 224 pp., hardcover)

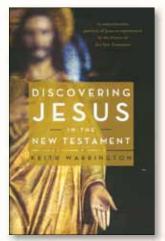
Vinson Synan, a highly respected historian, prolific writer, and academician, has presented this volume as an overview of Pentecostal and charismatic history, but he tells his own story in the process. He gives his assessment of the contours of the Pentecostal and charismatic revival and shows his own role in these remarkable events. Synan does not come across as arrogant or prideful.

Although the author covers a broad range of issues, he has written in down-to-earth language. The book covers nearly all of the major streams and influences that marked the 20th-century Pentecostal revival. He talks about the major controversies that are an essential part of Pentecostal history — the Shepherding Movement, Latter Rain Movement, the checkered story of televangelists, the Toronto Blessing, Brownsville Revival, and Lakeland Revival. He handles judiciously and graciously the current fascination with contemporary apostles and prophets. He has a good historian's perception of people and currents that are central to the unfolding story.

At the conclusion of his story, Synan offers 10 tentative predictions about the future. At the end of the century, gleaning insights from recent trends, he anticipates that more than half of all Christians will be either Pentecostal or charismatic. And, within this fold, he sees the Assemblies of God emerging as the largest single Protestant denomination worldwide.

AN EVERNITINESS REMEMBERS REMEMBERS THE CENTURY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT UNISON SYNAN

Ministers and laymen alike will enjoy this book.



Discovering Jesus in the New Testament

Discovering Jesus in the New Testament

KEITH WARRINGTON (Hendrickson Publishers, 240 pp., paperback)

Keith Warrington provides in this volume a "comprehensive portrait of Jesus as represented by the writers of the New Testament." Instead of focusing on a specific aspect of the life and ministry of Jesus, the author chooses to examine each New Testament book to determine the contribution each makes to the fuller picture of Christ. He is convinced that only in this way can we find a complete picture of Jesus. Warrington believes no one New Testament author presents everything we need to know about Jesus; but, taken together, these authors provide what we need to establish our doctrine of Christ and His work.

The basic assumption from which Warrington works is that "the New Testament writers were convinced of the full deity, sovereignty, and sinless humanity of Jesus as well as the historical nature of His incarnation, death, bodily resurrection, and ascension." Second, while these affirmations are acceptable to evangelical/Pentecostal theology, one wonders whether they should have been discovered in the texts first and then proclaimed.

Since this book treats each New Testament document in turn, it may better serve as a resource than one to be read at one sitting. When preaching/teaching from a given New Testament book, consulting Warrington's treatment provides great insights into the presentation of the Jesus story and theology. There is some redundancy as the New Testament authors occasionally affirm the same truths about Jesus.

Warrington's *Discovering Jesus in the New Testament* will make a valuable addition to a pastor's library, and one that will find repeated usage.

— Reviewed by James H. Railey Jr., D.Th., professor of theology, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation

JOHN H. SAILHAMER (InterVarsity, 612 pp., paperback)

John Sailhamer's purpose is "to find the compositional strategy of the Pentateuch and what it says about the Pentateuch's theological and normative claims as Scripture" (602). Thus he spends almost two-thirds of the book on the theories and evidences of how the Pentateuch was written as God's Word. As an evangelical, he keeps focused on the goal of understanding the intent of the divinely inspired author of the biblical text.

Sailhamer brings out some excellent understanding of the major theological themes and concepts of the Pentateuch. He has a clear view of the big picture and overall message of God in these books — salvation into an eternal relationship with God through the Savior-King God would send. Sailhamer also states: "The central purpose of the Pentateuch is to teach the importance of a life of faith" (539).

Both the strength and the weakness of this book is its depth of detailed discussion on important issues in understanding the Pentateuch. Sailhamer's well-articulated, careful, and insightful studies make this book valuable to anyone dealing with understanding the Pentateuch.

His explanations of covenant theology and dispensationalism are helpful. Also, he has a refreshing understanding of how we are to relate to the laws of the Pentateuch.

Sailhamer has made a valuable contribution to both Pentateuchal studies and the larger field of biblical theological studies.

— Reviewed by Roger D. Cotton, Th.D., professor of Old Testament, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

The Spirituality of Jesus

LESLIE T. HARDIN (Kregel Publishers, 208 pp., paperback)

In this lucid work, Leslie Hardin considers nine common spiritual practices of Jesus: prayer and solitude, casting down temptation, Scripture reading, corporate worship, submission, simplicity, care for the oppressed, fellowship meals, and evangelism and proclamation. He asserts that these routine disciplines in Jesus' life enabled His dynamic ministry in the Spirit.

After an opening chapter concerning the nature of spirituality, Hardin delves into each of these spiritual disciplines in Jesus' life, combining extensive biblical references with appropriate personal illustrations. Church leaders and laypeople alike are sure to find helpful balance to their own spiritual tendencies by considering these disciplines.

The chapters on corporate worship and simplicity address contemporary concerns involving Christians leaving churches and Americans' fast-paced, materialistic lifestyles, respectively. Hardin also weaves the disciplines together, showing how practicing one involves another. For example, in casting down temptation, Jesus relied heavily on prayer and Scripture memorization. Fellowship meals often gave Jesus opportunity for Kingdom proclamation and ministry to the marginalized.

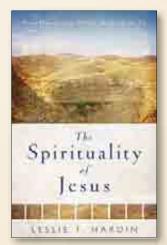
The final chapter considers "what's missing" from the list of disciplines Hardin discusses (fasting, tithing, etc.), and why Gospel accounts do not emphasize these practices. Each chapter closes with reflection questions that help encourage discussion about the personal and ecclesiastical significance of the material.

This work offers a necessary balance to the Pentecostal tendency toward extraordinary experiential encounters and the miraculous to the neglect of the everyday aspect of spiritual life and ministry. Believers today need to imitate Jesus' example of passionate discipline to continue His Spirit-filled ministry to the world.

> — Reviewed by Nathaniel Rhoads, pastor, Word of Life Fellowship (Assemblies of God), Winnemucca, Nevada.

John H. Sailhamer The Meaning of the Pentateuch Revealer. Conjunct and Incorporation

The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation

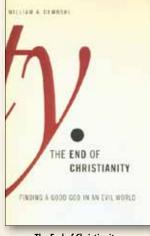


The Spirituality of Jesus

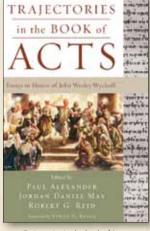
The End of Christianity

WILLIAM A. DEMBSKI (B&H Publishing, 238 pp., hardcover)

In another season of atheistic assaults on the relevance and claims of the biblical worldview, the title of Dembski's book is intended to



The End of Christianity



Trajectories in the Book of Acts: Essays in Honor of John Wesley Wyckoff

capture the interest of believers and skeptics alike. But he wastes no time in clarifying that there can and will be no demise of the Church. Instead, he explains that one of the "ends" or goals of Christianity is to provide a coherent theodicy. Particularly: What is the source and historical scope of evil?

Dembski is extending the arguments of old-earth creationism. He believes the world existed for billions of years prior to God setting Adam and Eve in the Garden and their subsequent rebellion. A major dilemma of old-earth creationists is the origin of disorder, suffering, and decay in the natural world in the thousands of millennia prior to the Garden and human sin. A standard resolution to this dilemma is to say that Satan is the source of this "natural evil." Dembski rejects this as contrary to the biblical teaching that sin entered the world through the choices of the first human couple. His book seeks to resolve this dilemma by proposing the "retroactive effects of the Fall." Briefly, the Fall was a real event that happened at a particular moment in time long after God spoke the cosmos into existence. The Creator, who is omniscient and outside of time, retroactively applied the consequences of the later sin to the outset of creation in the form of natural evil.

Dembski deftly integrates Scripture, theology, and science. His argument is neither simple nor without controversy, but his presentation is readable and well documented (footnotes and indices span over 40 pages). The *End of Christianity* would serve well as a thought-provoking component to study and discussion groups.

Trajectories in the Book of Acts: Essays in Honor of John Wesley Wyckoff

PAUL ALEXANDER, JORDAN DANIEL MAY, ROBERT G. REID, EDITORS (Wipf & Stock, 373 pp., paperback)

This Festschrift in honor of Dr. John Wyckoff is not only a fitting tribute to a Pentecostal educator, but also a valuable collection of current Pentecostal studies on the Book of Acts. The book begins with a biographical essay that presents Wyckoff's commitment to Pentecostalism as well as his successful efforts at helping biblical scholarship thrive at Southwestern Assemblies of God University. His story is inspiring and the essays on Acts that follow demonstrate the kind of scholarly endeavor he has helped inspire.

Some essays are by well-known scholars, but even the lesser-known writers make meaningful contributions. While this book is certainly a scholarly piece, much will still be accessible to pastors.

The essays demonstrate how the skillful use of critical biblical studies can draw useful insights from texts central to Pentecostalism, and help uphold traditional Pentecostal ideals. Writers use narrative criticism, rhetorical criticism, readers-response criticism, even "An Imperial-Critical Reading" of various passages in Acts in ways that support traditional Pentecostal themes. It is appropriate that these essays honoring a Pentecostal scholar who has dedicated his energies in training others demonstrate excellence in biblical studies.

As a pastor, this volume has not only provided me with insights into texts in Acts that will support my preaching and teaching, it has also encouraged me to think about these texts in fresh ways that should continue to be productive in studying and preaching the Bible, especially the Book of Acts.

----- Reviewed by Charles M. Lyons, M.Div., pastor, Bethel Assembly of God, Jacksonville, North Carolina.

The Three Tasks of Leadership: Worldly Wisdom for Pastoral Leaders

ERIC O. JACOBSEN, ed. (Eerdmans, 208 pp., paperback)

Can those leading a religious enterprise learn from those leading a secular enterprise? This compilation of articles honoring Max De Pree, former CEO of Herman Miller, assumes so by applying De Pree's three tasks of leadership — defining reality, becoming a servant and debtor, and saying thank you - to pastoral leadership.

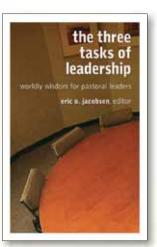
"Defining Reality" challenges the corporate mentality of many pastors. The subtle warning about viewing people as resources comes at a time when use of "resource" and its cognates is growing in ministry circles. A chapter comparing the two contemporary metaphors for pastors — shepherd versus business executive/CEO — is valuable for shaping a core identity for leaders in the "numerically focused life of North American religious organizations." These chapters implicitly warn against a reality with too little separation between the American church and the corporation.

"Servanthood" wrestles with the oxymoronic nature of servant leadership. Many reflections focus on tested spiritual formation practices such as mentoring, solitude, spiritual retreats, and contemplation. The author spends considerable time defining servant, apparently because so many definitions fail. The "Motivations for Service Continuum" chart is a useful self-assessment that challenges leaders to determine whether they lean toward self-serving or others-serving service. Overall though, these chapters feel disjointed, maybe because of the tension between leading and serving.

"Saying Thanks" identifies why leaders fail to thank others, such as their rank, sense of entitlement, the cultural loss of hospitality, or the devaluing of human relationships in lieu of efficiency. The author recommends gratitude not just for the relationship with God, but also for the leader's relationship with those he leads.

Overall, De Pree's *Three Tasks* made Herman Miller a successful business. Pastors would do well to consider them for the Father's business.

> — Reviewed by Chris Rainey, Assemblies of God minister, Leonia, New Jersey.



The Three Tasks of Leadership: Worldly Wisdom for Pastoral Leaders

TAKINGYOUR

WON'T GET YOU THERE

Gary L. McIntosh

TAKING YOUR CHURCH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

GARY L. MCINTOSH (Baker Books, 224 pp., paperback)

Accomplished author and church-growth consultant Gary L. McIntosh has delivered again with his latest work, *Taking Your Church to the Next Level*. Buzz phrase or not, it is every pastor's desire.

In 224 pages, McIntosh integrates church life-cycle analysis (watch out for year 60) with an in-depth reexamination of the traditional numerical growth barriers (no, it's not just 200) to present one of the most readable and comprehensive books on church growth probably on the market. I recommend it for every pastor.

What I find most intriguing is the book's subtitle, "What Got You Here Won't Get You There," as well as the Albert Einstein quote that introduces Chapter One: "The significant problems we face today cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

Having been fully immersed in the Fuller Seminary style church-growth culture in the 1980s, I have to wonder if more church-growth thinking will solve the deeper problems of the church in America. McIntosh's work (like most church-growth books) is about 95 percent sociological analysis and about 5 percent biblical/ theological analysis.

One wonders, after decades of following a plethora of Christian authors who have offered the best that sociology has to offer us, if our

problems are not deeper than sociology can solve.

Does this work truly take us to the next level or just finetune what we are doing at our present level of spirituality? Each reader will need to decide that for himself.

WHAT GOT YOU HERE

With Christ

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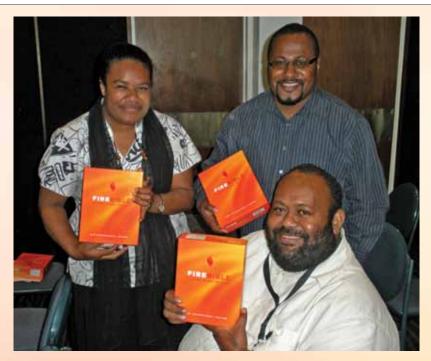
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News&Resources



Pastors and workers in Fiji receive their copy of the *Global Study Edition Fire Bible* (a special edition for those speaking English as a second language) at the Fire Bible launch in Suva, Fiji. This is one of the 10 *Fire Bibles* completed in 2010.

A Record Year for Fire Bibles

Thanks to church and individual supporters of the Assemblies of God Bible Alliance, 10 *Fire Bible* editions are on target to be completed in 2010. They are: 1) Amharic *Fire Bible* for Ethiopia; 2) Czech *Fire*

Bible for the Czech Republic; 3) *The Global Study Edition Fire Bible* (English as a second language groups); 4, 5, 6) Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba *Fire Bibles* for Nigeria; 7) Korean *Fire Bible* for South Korea; 8) Thai *Fire Bible* for Thailand; 9) Turkish *Fire Bible* for Turkey; and 10) the *Fire Bible for Kids* for children around the world. Every \$10 gift makes available a *Fire Bible* in an international language.

The Amharic *Fire Bible* will be a great help to the church in Ethiopia, according to Pastor Yonas Arefaine, general secretary of the Ethiopia Assemblies of God. He says there is a dire shortage of Bibles for pastors and workers in this country, where large numbers of people are accepting Christ and churches are being multiplied.

"The Fire Bible with its commentary written from a Pentecostal perspective will also help us maintain the Pentecostal experience in our churches," Yonas says. "When Ethiopians see the miraculous [work of God] taking place in people's lives, they often comment that there is a power in these people. If we do not preach the gospel with the power of the Holy Spirit and understanding in a way that it is a source of power that literally touches and changes people, we will not be successful in Ethiopia."



Ten new *Fire Bible* language editions are scheduled for completion in 2010.



This display, provided by the Assemblies of God Bible Alliance, will be sent free upon request to any church interested in making *Fire Bible* memorial giving accessible to its congregation.

Fire Bibles Make a Great Memorial Gift

The Assemblies of God Bible Alliance reports that many people choose to make *Fire Bibles* available to overseas pastors and layworkers as a way to honor the life or memory of loved ones.

The *Fire Bible* is the international language edition of the *Full Life Study Bible* produced by Bible Alliance. Overseas ministers often call the *Fire Bible* a one-book Bible school because of its many study helps under one cover: extensive Pentecostal notes, a concordance, 77 theme articles, biblical maps, and more. AG Bible Alliance has completed more than 30 *Fire Bible* language editions and nearly 30 more are in development.

Every \$10 gift makes a *Fire Bible* available in an international language edition. Some people send a memorial gift for five, 10, or more *Fire Bibles* to honor their loved one. Any church or individual interested in making *Fire Bible* memorial gifts can learn more about the Fire Bible Legacy Fund by visiting www.BibleAlliance.org or by calling Bible Alliance at 800-532-0440.

Bible Alliance offers a free display to any church interested in making this memorial giving accessible to its congregation. The display provides the Fire Bible Legacy Fund brochure (which tells the story of the *Fire Bible* and its worldwide impact) and beautiful acknowledgement cards (In Honor Of and In Memory Of) that can be sent to family and friends by Bible Alliance or the donor to announce

the memorial gift. The *Fire Bible* is quickly becoming one of the most widely distributed study Bibles in the world.



Faith Case™: Fruit of the Spirit

Gospel Publishing House introduces the newest installment in the *Faith Case series, Faith Case: Fruit of the Spirit.* Like its predecessor *Faith Case: Investigating the Truth,* this new theme is part of an overall strategy by the Assemblies of God executive leadership team to emphasize Pentecostal truths throughout the Fellowship.

Alton Garrison, assistant general superintendent, says, "With both *Faith Case* kits, the goal is to intentionally pass on Pentecostal doctrine and experience to children. It is of utmost importance that children learn from a young age the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, to make them bold witnesses for Christ, because they are the next generation of leaders to impact our world. *Faith Case* curriculum strategically helps churches achieve that goal."

Sponsored by the AG Trust, Faith Case Children's Church resources have grown out of field-driven needs. Rod Loy, pastor of First Assembly of God in Little Rock, Ark., along with children's ministry leaders from across the nation, planned the resources in answer to churches' stated wishes.

This cutting-edge, DVD-driven children's church curriculum features a new character — Adam Apple — who will delight kids as they learn about the nine fruit of the Spirit. Bible stories illustrate the fruit, including Jesus healing the blind man, the Prodigal Son, Jesus calming the storm, Lazarus, the Good Samaritan, and others. In addition, cool

object lessons, games, prayer times, and three fun video clips per session make learning fun. Just one person can lead *Faith Case*, a practical benefit for small churches.

Laura Schroeder says, "This is the most phenomenal program I've ever used. I am the children's pastor at a smallish church, and my teachers love *Faith Case* curriculum because it is so easy to use and keeps the kids' attention throughout the entire service without sacrificing great biblical content."

For more information, visit www. faithcase.com. To order, call 1.800.641.4310.

website: www.agfinancialinsurance.com, or call 866-662-8210.

 Eric Huie, retirement planning consultant manager, AG Financial Solutions.

World Health Sunday 2011

HealthCare Ministries, the international medical outreach of Assemblies of God World Missions, would like to partner with your church to acknowledge the impact healthcare providers make in our lives.

HCM has designated April 24, 2011, as World Health Sunday. We encourage you to honor healthcare professionals in your church and community on this day and challenge your congregation to be a part of bringing His hope that heals both spiritually and physically to the nations.

For a resources packet to assist you in celebrating World Health Sunday, and to become involved in helping bring His hope that heals to the nations, contact HealthCare Ministries at 417-866-6311, e-mail whs@healthcareministries.org, or visit www.healthcareministries.org.

Winter Weather Advisory: Simple Steps Protect Against the Expense of Broken Pipes

We all take steps to keep ourselves warm during the winter. It is just as important to keep your ministry facility protected against the cold. Every year we see a rash of claims due to pipes freezing and bursting. These losses can be easily prevented with a few simple procedures.

First, ensure outside walls are properly insulated. Without adequate insulation, all other efforts will be a waste of time and money. Contact a local contractor to assess your needs and add insulation if necessary.

Second, set your thermostat to keep the entire building warm. Recently, a well-intentioned church member turned the thermostat off wanting to save his church money on its utility bill. The result was a frozen pipe that broke and caused hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage. If your facility has different heating zones, make sure all of them are set to an appropriate temperature.

Third, leave faucets on exterior

Photos.com

walls dripping during intense cold. Also, disconnect all hoses from exterior spigots. Leaving a hose connected to an exterior spigot is a common source of frozen and, subsequently, broken pipes.

Finally, check your building frequently. In the example mentioned above, no one stopped by the church for 2 days while the broken pipe spewed water. If your staff does not keep regular business hours, stop by regularly and inspect the building. Check the thermostat to ensure it is heating all of the building properly. Quickly walk around the

inside to look and listen for leaks. And, in severe cold, make sure your faucets are dripping. If you plan to be away for several days or if you think you might not be able to reach the building due to a storm — you might consider turning off the water.

AG Financial Insurance Solutions specializes in protecting churches and ministries. We understand the unique needs and challenges of ministry operations. This is why we work proactively to keep your organization safe from loss; and we commit to restore you as efficiently as possible if an accident does occur. For more information about how we can help, visit our

Living in the Spirit **Church-wide Study** The new *Living in the Spirit Kit,* a

first-of-its-kind study on the Holy Spirit created for children, teens, and adults, was created in answer to a need expressed by churches nationwide. Earlier this year, General Superintendent George 0. Wood wrote a letter to districts saying, "The Executive Presbytery and I discussed a comment we had been hearing from across the Fel-

lowship. Pastors and church workers need a teaching tool to help believers of all ages become aware of and be better informed about the Holy Spirit."

The *Living in the Spirit Kit* debuted spring 2010 and many churches are using this teaching resource. This kit features 8 weeks of material for children, teens, and adults.

"Scripture supports the importance that every believer be filled with the Holy Spirit. I am confident that this engaging new resource will educate and invigorate people of all ages," Wood's letter noted.

Lesson topics include: Who is the Holy Spirit? What is the Baptism? How do the gifts of the Spirit apply today? and more.



Designed for ease and flexibility, the *Living in the Spirit Kit* features lesson-reinforcing DVD resources, instructions on CD, and discussion starters. The kit contains one Discussion DVD and CD for adults and teens, one Teaching DVD and CD for adults, one Kids' Sessions DVD and CD, and one copy of *Living in the Spirit* by George 0. Wood.

Churches can draw maximum turnout for *Living in the Spirit* by using free downloadable materials. A poster, bulletin inserts, and postcards for both adults and families with kids are available.

Kits are available in English and Spanish. For more information, visit **www.livinginthespirit.ag.org.** To order, call 1-800-641-4310.

Final HighPoint® Curriculum Kit Released

Nearly 4 years after the debut of *HighPoint* **curriculum kits, Gospel Publishing House recently released the final** *HighPoint* **kit,** *Supernatural***. GPH released the first of the character-building kits,** *Good Anger Bad Anger***, in Fall 2006.** *Good Anger Bad Anger* **introduces kids to Dr. Quirky in Antarctica who helps kids learn to control their anger. With each new five-session kit, kids (K–6th) learn a biblical character trait in a fun destination: Joy in Jamaica, Generosity in Italy, Courage in Australia, and Respect in Britain.**

Along with the excitement, kids also learn how the Bible applies to their lives. The signature crazy character for each kit reinforces the Bible point. Now, 30 kits later, in *Supernatural*, kids meet Jet Fuel in outer space, who helps them learn to trust in God's supernatural intervention. *Supernatural's* Bible point is: God Can Do Anything!

With 30 life-changing topics — enough for 3 years — *HighPoint* curriculum is flexible for midweek, children's church, or Sunday school.

HighPoint is creating a buzz on Facebook. Children's leaders exchange

testimonies, decorating ideas, photos, and suggestions to enhance the *HighPoint* experience for kids. Visit www.facebook.com/highpoint. For more details or to order, visit www.gph. org/highpoint, or call 1.800.641.4310.

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to the imperative. In English grammar, indicative sentences state facts, while imperative sentences state commands. *Indicative:* "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Exodus 20:2). *Imperative:* "You shall have no other gods before me," which is the first of the Ten

Commandments

The Bible in 7 Words

he medieval Jewish scholar, Maimonides, counted 613 commandments in the law of Moses — 248 positive and 365 negative.¹ Typed as one-line summary statements in 12-point Times New Roman font, these 613 commandments fill 15 single-space pages. That's a lot of dos and don'ts.

A friend of mine once told me that the number of laws in the Old Testament made him glad he was a Christian rather than a Jew. How could anyone possibly know, let alone obey, all those rules? What a privilege, then, to live "not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

I thought then, and I think now, that my friend made a bad argument. To understand why, consider Jesus' answer to the question, " 'Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' Jesus replied, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' *All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments*" (Matthew 22:36,37, emphasis added).

According to Jesus, the 613 commandments of the Law boil down to just two:



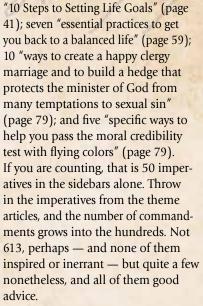
Love God, love people. If 613 are hard, two are doable. My friend's argument was bad for another reason: He subordinated the indicative (20:3–17). In the Bible, the indicative states what God has done for us, and the imperative, what God commands us to do for Him. The indicative precedes the imperative. Exodus comes before Sinai, grace before works (Ephesians 2:8–10).

Psalm 136 reveals the motive behind God's actions: "His love endures forever." Why did God create the heavens and the earth? "His love endures forever" (verses 1–9). Why did God lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt and into freedom in the Promised Land? "His love endures forever" (verses 10–26). All God's actions and all God's commandments flow from a heart of love.

Putting the indicative together with the imperative, we get the Bible in seven words: God loves us. Love Him. Love people.

You are probably thinking, What does this have to do with the winter 2011 *Enrichment* theme: "Toward Excellence in Life and Ministry"? Everything.

I counted the lists in the sidebars of this issue's theme articles: "8 Ways to Grow a Great Soul" (page 26); "10 Tips for Ministry Excellence" (page 36);



How could anyone possibly know, let alone obey, all these rules for excellence in life and ministry? Simple. Our authors' advice boils down to the Bible's seven words.

Do I want to move toward excellence in my life with God? *God loves me. Love Him. Love people.*

Do you want to move toward excellence in your relationship with your spouse, your children, your friends, and your coworkers? *God loves you. Love Him. Love people.*

Do we want our churches to move toward excellence in our life together and in our ministry to the community? *God loves us. Love Him. Love people.*

Excellence in life and ministry is doable, no matter how high the number of imperatives, as long as you remember that there is no excellence in life or in ministry apart from "the most excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31).

NOTE

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/613_Mitzvot.



GEORGE PAUL WOOD, director of Ministry Resourcing and executive editor of Enrichment journal, Springfield, Missouri.

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